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A DECADE

OF

ITALIAN WOMEN.

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BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE GIRLHOOD OF CATHERINE DE' MEDICI."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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A DECADE OF ITALIAN WOMEN.

TULLIA D'ARAGONA.

(About 1510—about 1570.)

CHAPTER I.

MY LORD CARDINAL'S DAUGHTER.

One remarkable circumstance among those which specially characterised the great intellectual movement in Italy in the sixteenth century, was the large part taken in it by women. The writers of literary history,—a class especially abundant to the south of the Alps,—enumerate a surprisingly long catalogue of ladies more or less celebrated for their works. The list of poetesses registered by Tiraboschi as flourishing during the first half of the sixteenth century, consists of some forty names. And he intimates, that it might have been made much longer, had he thought it worth while to record every name mentioned by the chroniclers of such matters, who preceded him. A great many more are noticed as having been "learned" or "skilled in polite literature."

Such facts constitute a very note-worthy feature of

the social aspect of the period in question; and doubtless influenced largely the tone of society and manners, as well as the position and well-being of the sex. But it is very questionable, whether certain theories respecting the comparative value of modern female education, to which all this sixteenth century galaxy has given rise, be not founded on misconception partly of the value of the learning possessed by these ladies, and more still of the circumstances and appearance, under which it presented itself to them.

Intellectual culture in that day meant especially, almost exclusively, what has been since more technically called "learning." The movement, which was then once again stirring up the mind of the educated classes arose mainly, as every body knows, from the discovery and resuscitation of the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. To be, if not a good Grecian, at least a competent Latin scholar, was the first step absolutely necessary in the liberal education of either male or female. Nay, it constituted very frequently not only the first step, but the entire course. In Italy this was in an especial degree the case. Not only the fashion of literature, but the general tone of the educated mind became classical,—and pagan. And the rapidity with which the new modes of thought and fashion of taste spread, and,—speaking of course with reference only to the educated classes,—popularised themselves, is very striking. But they did so, because they were eminently suited to the proclivity of the minds to which they were presented.

For this new learning came to them as an emancipation and a licence. Such learning as had been before in existence was dry, severe, repulsive, associated only with ideas of discipline, sacrifice, and

renunciation of the world and its pleasures — the proper business of ascetic priests and hermits. The new studies were the reverse of all this. Elegant, facile, materialistic in all their tendencies and associations, adapting themselves readily to the amusements and passions of the young and gay, they must be compared, if we would parallel them with aught of modern culture, with the lighter of those accomplishments, which are now called ornamental. The total unchristianising of Italian society, which the rage for classical literature very rapidly produced, was such as strikingly to justify the modern* crusade against classical culture preached by those who are anxious to preserve such Christianity as that, which then went down before the irruption of literary paganism. The exquisitely organised æsthetic faculties of the southern mind eagerly imbibed and readily assimilated the habits of thought, generated by a religion, whose only real object of worship was material beauty. The extremely relaxed morality of the time was subjected to a refining influence, but by no means checked by a literature rich in poetical drapery for every form of vice. And the lightest, gayest, freest portion of society, beginning now to be awakened to a relish for the elegances of life by increasing wealth and luxury, found exactly what suited them in the revived literature of the forefathers of their race; a literature which was the product of generations uninfluenced by the wholly irreconcilable ideas of a philosophy and religion imposed on their descendants with very partial success by men of differently constituted races from the east and from the north.

* Gaume, ver Rongeur.

Englishmen are wont to estimate the study of the literature of Greece and Rome in a manner very much at variance with the ideas expressed in the above sentences; and judging it, as of course we do, from its results among ourselves, most justly so. It would take us much too far afield to examine satisfactorily why these results should have been so different in the two cases. The most important portion of the causes of difference would probably be found to consist in the dissimilarity of our northern idiosyncrasies to those of the ancient writers. In Italy, the old tree bore its own natural fruit. With us, it was engrafted on another stock. The southern mind became all classical. The northern mind was modified only by contact with the ancient literature. Perhaps also, some weight may be allowed to the greater difficulty of the study in our case; whence it has arisen, that the thorough and analytical study of the dead languages, has been deemed eminently profitable as intellectual discipline, and as the best foundation of general mental culture.

And these views of classic learning lead us to attribute almost instinctively, as it were, a high degree of solidity, grave scholastic laboriousness, and respectability to the acquirements of those who possess it. A lady well read in Greek and Latin, appears to us to have necessarily reached an intellectual elevation which places her above the shallowness, superficiality, and frivolousness with which modern female education is ordinarily reproached. And we sigh over the supposed inferiority in this respect, of England in the nineteenth century, to the brilliant Italy of the sixteenth. It is true, that in the case of Vittoria Colonna, we have seen a product of the classical

training of that day, which — *mutatis mutandis* — we might be content to reproduce. But the instance is wholly exceptional; and the qualities, moreover, which we admire in Vittoria are to be traced, probably, as far as they are independent on constitutional idiosyncrasy, to those associations with some very remarkable men, which taught her to use her ancient learning as a tool, and not a final object.

The subject of these pages is a less exceptional product of Italian sixteenth century classical studies; but by no means a less curious and suggestive exponent of one phase of the social life and manners of that epoch.

Among the grave and reverend seniors industriously busy at Trent, in the year 1552, at their great work of constructing a dam to stop the course of a perennial river, may be observed one Peter Tagliavia, Archbishop of Palermo, a silver-haired and right reverend old man, very prudent, wise, and sagacious, we are told, in the management of affairs of all* sorts. There he is sagaciously dragging forward his bit of stick to contribute to the formation of the great dam, undismayed by the swift running of the stream the while. He is much puzzled by the consideration of the manner and style in which it will be proper for the assembled Fathers of the Church to communicate with heretics. For it is quite clear, on the one hand, that *being* heretics and excommunicate, and damned already accordingly, all propriety and Church etiquette would require that they should be treated and adressed as such. But, on the other hand, there is reason to believe that their arrogance will reach the height of

* Roccho Pirro. Sicilia Sacra, ad. art. Tagliavia.

expecting to be treated like Christians, and that failing such treatment, no reply will be got from them at all, and so all proceedings be stopped *in limine*.* Very perplexing!

The sagacious Archbishop insisted much on this point, dragging up his bit of drift wood to the dam with pertinacious industry. He was made a cardinal in the following year for this and other merits; partly also, because he had royal blood in his veins,—writing himself "Tagliavia d'Aragona." He died five years later, in 1558, still busy in damming that terrible river, which was already changing the face of things around him. Even Rome itself was very unlike what he had remembered it in the good old times, some fifty years ago or thereabouts. Ah! Rome was worth living in and living for in those days! Happy days! when, as His Eminence of Bibbiena used to say, we wanted nothing but a court with ladies. Court, with ladies, quotha!

And with that our Archbishop's musings on the brave old days, when the second Julius was Pope, and no heretical turbulence had yet disturbed the sacerdotal empyrean, could hardly fail to recall a tolerably brilliant galaxy of such ladies, as were especially attracted from all parts of Italy, to a court whose numerous and wealthy courtiers were all professionally and permanently bachelors.

"Poor Giulia!" sighed the Archbishop, "sometimes I wonder what became of her?"

We will not ask for a reference to the accurate historian, who overheard, and has chronicled these words. Roccho Pirro, in his learned and voluminous

* Sarpi., lib. iv. sec. 37.

history of the Sicilian prelates, it is true, omits to mention them. Yet, I think, that if his Eminence, Pietro Tagliavia d'Aragona, had been satisfactorily Boswellised, they must have been recorded. For "poor Giulia" had been the mother* of the rising young churchman's daughter some fifty years or so before the time at which we find his Eminence working in his vocation at the great dam. And this daughter was the celebrated Tullia (more or less) d'Aragona.

What *did* become of poor Giulia? Giulia of Ferrara, the most celebrated beauty of her day, in all Italy: the noted toast of Rome,—the be-rhymed of ecclesiastical sonnetteers—the sighed-for by purple-stockinged swains: Giulia, the Aspasia of many a frocked Pericles, and the mother of a royal-blooded churchman's child! How should respectable Mnemosyne know what becomes of such? Mnemosyne mentions, with a blush, having just seen her once in the pride of her beauty, flashing with cortège of horses and attendants, and glitter through the streets of Rome.† And that is all. Mnemosyne begs to be asked nothing more about her; and proceeds to relate with much complacency the fortunes and preferments of the excellent Cardinal Archbishop, the rules that he made for his clergy, and the privileges and property he acquired for his Church.

Yet despite all this propriety on the part of respectable Mnemosyne, despite her decent reticences, and official records of Palermo chapterhouse doings, and Trent diplomacy, despite learned Roccho Pirro's

* Zilioli, Storia di' poeti Ital., cited by Mazzuchelli, art. "Tullia."
† Note 1.

folios and immortality in the columns of Ciacconius,* the fact is, that if the name of Archbishop Peter Tagliavia d'Aragona is ever now spoken by the lips of living nineteenth-century men, it is owing, incredible as the circumstance would have seemed to his Eminence, solely to his relationship to little *nullius filia* Tullia. Not that the blood-royal young churchman, candidate as he was there at Rome, under the immediate eye of infallibility for the Church's highest honours—scarlet stockings, palliums, red hats, and what not—seems to have felt any scruples and embarrassment about the matter. At all events he provided abundantly for his "furtively received daughter," as Zilioli phrases it; and took care that she should receive an education, calculated to make the most of the brilliant talents of all sorts, manifested by her from her earliest childhood. "To the utter astonishment of learned men," says Zilioli, "she was heard to carry on a disputation in Latin while yet a child. She wrote also both in Latin and in Italian compositions worthy of any literary man. So that, when grown up, joining as she did, to her knowledge and worth, an exquisite elegance of manner, she acquired the reputation of being the most perfectly accomplished woman of her time. She appeared in public with so much grace, with such beauty, and such affability of manner, that when to all that was added the magnificence and adornment of dress, calculated to set off all the charms of her person † to the utmost, it is impossible to imagine anything more charming and exquisitely finished than

* Vitæ Pontif. et Cardin.

† "L'ornamento degli abiti lascivi," is Zilioli's phrase.

she was. Her musical touch was so exquisite, and she managed her voice in singing so sweetly, that the first professors were astonished at her performance. She spoke with grace and with rare eloquence, so that whether in light conversation or serious discussion, she delighted and captivated her hearers, like a second Cleopatra; and at the same time, her lovely and ever cheerful features were not wanting in those more potent charms, which admirers of female beauty are wont to look for in a beautiful face."

So richly had nature endowed, and so successfully had art cultivated the child of the rising churchman! Father and daughter were both, during those early years of the sixteenth century, perfecting themselves for their subsequent destinies in the strangely jumbled social world of that wonderful old Rome; he duly progressing towards scarlet stockings and hats; and she to the somewhat similarly coloured promotion, in the enjoyment of which, painfully blushing Mnemosyne next authentically falls in with her.

CHAPTER II.

ASPASIA REDIVIVA.

It is fancied, with small reason probably, that to grow old is necessarily more disagreeable to women than to men. And dates are therefore popularly held to be especially detestable facts to the fair sex. If this be so, the world in this matter, as in most others, showed itself excessively complaisant to our fascinating sixteenth century, Aspasia. For her contemporaries have been most strangely silent on the subject as regards her. The year of her birth, and more strangely still, that of her death, are alike unknown and undiscoverable. Must we therefore conclude, that the departure of the superannuated beauty, was as little interesting to the world as the arrival of the "furtively received" infant?

The literary historians content themselves with vaguely stating, that Tullia "flourished" in 1550.* It is true, that a difference of opinion may be supposed to exist as to the portion of her career best deserving to be so characterised. But it is to be feared, that poor Tullia herself must have considered her "flourishing" to be over and gone for ever, by the time she reached that period. For in

* Mazzuchelli, vol. i. p. 938.

the total silence and negligence of every regular clerk in Mnemosyne's office, some not-to-be-baffled, Dry-as-dust, whom our brilliant Tullia would doubtless have hated with instinctive aversion, has succeeded in poking out a certain letter that blabs much. Ah! those old letters in dusty yellow bundles, with the unimpeachable evidences of their signatures, addresses, and dates, hoarded by some correspondent's preserving instincts, in many cases little counted on by the writer, how much of all we know about our predecessors on earth's surface is due to their unforeseen tale-telling!

In the year 1531, Rome was settling down into her usual way of life, after the dreadful catastrophes of 1527. Pope Clement the Seventh had got over the most perilous and immediate of his troubles, but was, as Popes are wont to be, very much in need of assistance from his banker. Now, this necessary and important person was no other than the celebrated Filippo Strozzi, who was then in Rome, busied in the political as well as the monetary affairs of the papacy. But Strozzi was one of those marvellous men, whose abounding vital energies enable them to unite in their own persons, characters, pursuits, and occupations, which might seem to belong to half a dozen most dissimilar individuals. His political speculations and intrigues did not interfere with his much-loved literary pursuits. His free-thinking philosophy did not prevent his close intimacy with the Pope. And his vast commercial and banking operations were somehow made compatible with the career of a very notorious man of pleasure.

How nearly two of the manifestations of this multiform character would occasionally chance to jostle

each other, is indicated by the conclusion of a long and important letter * on matters of high political moment to Francesco Vettori. "Write to me in reply," he says, "and be sure, that your letter shall be seen by no one but His Holiness, as I desire may be the case with this of mine, written in much haste, and with Tullia at my side." Dated, Rome, 28th January, 1531.

Was the bewitching Tullia close enough to his side to look over his shoulder, as the plotting politician wrote matters to be shown only to the Pope? Did she interest herself in schemes for the keeping a Florentine oligarchy in check? Or did she sit patiently at the writer's elbow, while he penned a letter of sixty-four lines of small print, waiting till he was at leisure to bestow some attention on his companion? In either case the degree of intimacy indicated is much closer than an ordinary one. Yet the next letter,† written little more than a month later to the same correspondent, seems in its sadly Don-Juan-like tone, to afford very clear evidence that the writer, if not already tired of his gifted Sappho, certainly considered his *liaison* with her in the nature of a "terminable contract."

After a few lines on political matters, this Don Juan of a middle-aged banker ‡ writes as follows:

"As for my own private affairs, I should be sorry, that you should have believed certain silly stories of challenges and quarrels, about matters which in truth passed amicably among friends here. For though

* Printed at p. 183 of the "Documenti Storici," appended by Signor Bigazzi to Niccolini's tragedy of "Filippo Strozzi." Firenze, 1847.

† *Ibid.*, p. 185.

‡ Strozzi was then forty-three.

I do not pretend to take rank among your very prudent people, still I don't want to be set down as a perfect fool, as truly I should deserve to be, had I got into any such scrape for Tullia, or any other woman. She is not, as you say, beautiful; but she is, if I am not mistaken, highly gifted with talent and wit; and on that account, as it is impossible to me to live without the society of women, I have preferred hers to that of others.* And I have assisted her in some of her necessities, to prevent her from going to the wall by unjust oppression, during the period of my connection with her, which would have been painful and discreditable to me."

The date of this letter is March the 2nd, 1531.

And as this date, with that of the preceding letter, are among the very few of any kind discoverable with reference to Tullia's biography, we must make the most of them. It is to be presumed, then, from the above passages, that she must have been at least twenty, and probably older, in 1531. But as her father died in 1558, and appears to have been engaged in active business up to the time of his death, and as no intimation is found of his age, as would probably have been the case, if he had lived to be remarkably old, we can hardly be very far wrong, in supposing him to have been about seventy at the time of his death, and accordingly two-and-twenty in 1510. It would seem, therefore, that Tullia could not have been born much before, and certainly not much after that date.

In one respect, however, poor Tullia was assuredly wronged by the wealthy and libertine Florence banker. He says that she was not beautiful. Now, the testi-

* Note 2.

mony of a dozen enamoured poets might be adduced in favour of her rare and fascinating beauty. And if it should be thought that evidence of this kind, however abundant and concurrent, needs confirmation, it has been supplied by the sister art. There is an admirable portrait of her by Bonvicini, a contemporary of Raphael, more generally known as Il Moretto da Brescia, which was engraved very tolerably at Milan, in 1823, by Caterina Piotti. It represents a very lovely face of the genuine regal type of Roman beauty. The brow is noble; and the magnificently cut, but rather large and statuesque features might perhaps seem somewhat hard in the firmness of their rich contour, were not the expression softened by an eye eloquent of all the tenderer emotions. Laurel branches fill the whole background of the picture, in token of the lady's rank as a poetess.

How long after the date of the above-mentioned letters Tullia continued her residence in Rome, there remain no means of ascertaining. Zilioli says that she left it "after the death of her husband." And this one phrase is the only intimation of any sort we meet with, that such a person as Tullia's husband ever existed. It is true that such an appendage is not of a nature likely to be dwelt much on in love verses addressed to a lady. And to this category belong the greatest number of the notices of her, which have come down to us. Yet it seems strange that a wife should be celebrated from one end of Italy to the other, and recorded, or at least mentioned, in the pages of every literary historian of her country, and that she should have a husband whose name even was never, as it should seem, alluded to by his cotemporaries, and who has not left the slightest trace of his

existence. It must be supposed that, if ever spoken of at all, he was only known as "La Tullia's" husband, a member of society discharging functions somewhat analogous to those of a Ballerina's mama. It is, at all events, certain that the lady was never known either among her contemporaries, or subsequently, by any other name than that of Tullia d'Aragona, and more commonly simply "La Tullia." And the strangeness of the view of sixteenth century society offered to us by an examination of the position "La Tullia" occupied in it, is not a little increased by the fact of her having had a sort of behind-the-scenes husband, who appears to have exercised about as much influence on her social standing as her waiting-maid.

There is reason to suppose that her residence in Rome must have continued till 1540 or 1541. For among the "Strozziane"* MSS. preserved in the Magliabecchian library at Florence, there is a volume containing the rules, members' names, transactions, &c. of the Academy of the "Humidi," in which are entered three or four sonnets sent from Rome to the Society by Tullia. They are not dated; but the Academy was founded in 1540, and the volume bears at the end the date of 1541. Nothing can be conceived more insipid and dry, than the lucubrations of these "Humid" Academicians; and in truth the effusions despatched to them by Tullia, and honoured by the Academy with insertion in their solemn Archives, are quite worthy of their place in the Humid annals. One is a sonnet in praise of Cosmo I. It begins "Almo pastor," and attributes to that low-

* MSS. Stroz., Clas. 7, Cod. No. 95, p. 75.

minded debauchee and cruel tyrant all the virtues that can possibly be packed into fourteen lines.

And this was written a couple of years after Filippo Strozzi (the very particular friend and protector, by whose side it was a pleasure to sit, while he wrote long business letters in 1531) put himself to death in despair, in preference to remaining in the power of Cosmo, his mortal and vindictive enemy. One might suspect that the fair Tullia had had an opportunity of looking over his shoulder also when he was writing that second letter, in which he had dared to say that she was not beautiful!

Another of the sonnets sent by Tullia, and preserved by the "Humidi," is inscribed to Maria Salviati, and begins—

"Soul pure and bright, as when thou cam'st from God!"

Whence it may be inferred that there was in those days no such yawning abyss between the "monde" and "demi-monde," as to prevent a lady highly placed in the former from being addressed acceptably by one who, according to nineteenth century notions, must be deemed a denizen of the latter.

It must be understood, however, that any such phrase applied to Tullia's social position in her own sixteenth century, would give a very erroneous idea of what that in reality was. The classic Hetaira seems more akin to this Apollo-chartered libertine of an age bent on being equally classical.

Accordingly we find that the house of La Tullia—*her* house! no mention or hint of that Junius-like individual (Il Tullio, shall we call him?), who must nevertheless be supposed to have been at home there under hatches somewhere, or acting perhaps as groom-

porter, and shouting the names and titles of the Monsignori and Eminences, as they arrived;—the house of La Tullia was frequented by the "best society" in Rome. Ludovico Domenichi of Piacenza, himself a poet and a curious specimen of a sixteenth century professional literary man, who must have known Tullia at Florence in the latter years of her life, has recorded some of the sayings and doings of a company assembled at her house in Rome.*

A party of "gentilhuomini virtuosi" there were discussing Petrarch; and the question was raised, how far he had availed himself of ideas suggested to him by ancient Tuscan and Provençal poets. While this was being debated, "L'Humore da Bologna" came in. This personage is mentioned frequently by Domenichi as a sayer and doer of eccentricities and droll things; but I have not succeeded in finding any account of him; and think it probable that "L'Humore" may have been one of those nick-names which the Italians are so fond of bestowing on one another. He at once showed himself to be quite at home, says Ludovico, laid aside his cloak; and entering into the conversation, gave it as his opinion that Petrarch had served the verses of his predecessors as Spaniards serve the cloaks, which they steal in the night; put fresh ornaments and trimmings on them, so that when they appear in them the next day, they are no longer recognisable. Upon which a Spaniard, who chanced to be among the company, attempted to call "L'Humore" to account for this insulting mention of his countrymen. "What!" cried the wit, "is your Excellency a Spaniard? Boy, bring me my cloak

* Facetie, Motti, e Burle, Raccolte per M. L. Domenichi. Venetia, 1588.

directly!" And so saying, he put it on, and wrapped it closely round him, as he sat, to the infinite amusement, says Domenichi, of the assembled company.

After the death of that mysterious phantom, her husband, says Zilioli, Tullia left Rome in search of "fresh fields and pastures new." We can only know that this was after 1540. But it must have been much after this that she took up her residence in Florence. For the same writer tells us, that she was then both in years and appearance pretty nearly an old woman.* In 1562 she was, according to the date we have assigned to her birth, only fifty-two or three, or thereabouts. And she must have resided in Florence several years prior to that date. For she lived there, we are told, under the patronage of Cosmo's Duchess Eleonora of Toledo, who died in that year. So that she could not have been much more than half-way between forty and fifty, when she appeared to be "half an old woman."

Supposing her to have gone to Florence about 1555, and to have left Rome not long after 1540, there is a space of some twelve or fifteen years, during which we very nearly lose all sight of her.

Very nearly, but not quite; for we hear of long residences at Venice and Ferrara; and can trace her to Bologna by a phrase in an epigram too coarsely abusive to be reproduced, which Pasquin fired after her when she quitted Rome. Little cared the brilliant poetess-errant for pasquinades let off behind her back, while her course from one pleasure-loving court to another was tracked, as Zilioli writes, by "an infinite number of lovers, especially among the poets, who pursued her

* "Mezza Vecchia."

like a pack of greyhounds, striving to bring her down by volleys of odes and sonnets," to which our not insensible Sappho was ready enough to reply in similar strain.

Here, as a specimen of "her make," as the Italians say, is a sonnet addressed by her to Pietro Manelli, of Florence, who was one of her most devoted slaves:

"Qual vaga Filomena, che fuggita
È dall' odiata gabbia, ed in superba
Vista sen va tra gli arboscelli e l'erba
Tornata in libertate, e lieta vita;
Ed io dagli amorosi lacci uscita,
Schernendo ogni martir, e pena acerba
Dell' incredibil duol, che in se riserba
Qual ha per troppo amar l'alma smarrita;
Ben avev' io ritolte, ahi stella fiera!
Dal tempio di Ciprigna le mie spoglie
E di lor premio me n'andava altera.
Quando a me Amor; le tue ritrose voglie
Muterò, disse; e femmi prigioniera
Di tua virtù, per rinovar mie doglie."

Which may be Englished as follows, without, it is to be hoped, any very cruel injury to the original:

"As when from her abhorr'd captivity
Fair Philomel hath fled, and proudly takes
Her way through grassy meads and bushy brakes
Restored to joyous life and liberty;
So I, from amorous bonds escaping free,
All torment scorning, and the poignant aches
Of grief untold, which too much loving makes
The doom of such, as love-bewilder'd be,
Had borne (alas! my hapless stars!) away
My garments from the Cyprian Goddess' shrine
Proud of the feat, when Love to me did say,
'I will transform that stubborn will of thine;'
And so he made me captive to thy power,
Renewing all my torments from that hour."

This sonnet is not worse than thousands of other such, which obtained for their fabricators the name and reputation of poets in that age of vaunted intel-

lectual movement; and it is certainly better than the majority of them.

And thus our brilliant Aspasia of the *renaissance* fluttered from court to court, everywhere received with open arms, everywhere the cynosure of all eyes, everywhere the centre of a knot of poets and *littérateurs;* and flashing off her sonnets and canzonets right and left; now as offerings to be laid at the feet of some most illustrious duke or duchess, and now in loving or saucy requital of those addressed to her by her brethren of the guild.

But as

> "All that's bright must fade,
> The brightest still the fleetest,"

the inexorable years too soon brought poor Tullia to that period of "half old-womanhood," as Zilioli so uncourteously terms it, which must have nearly coincided with the date assigned by grave Mazzuchelli to that period of "flourishing," which, it is to be feared, the "half-old woman" would have fixed some five-and-twenty years earlier.

And what was to be done by a brilliant Apollo-chartered Aspasia, when fallen into half old-womanhood?

CHAPTER III.

"ALL'S WELL, THAT ENDS WELL."

ONE of two alternatives only, according to the well-known *dictum* of a judicious French philosopher, could be adopted by any Aspasia or other "charming woman" whatsoever, when brought to that pass. She must either take to cards, or "enter into devotion." Such would seem, according to the authority alluded to, to be the law of nature, which rules the destinies of charming women whose charms have gone from them. Tullia appears to have chosen the latter alternative, and established herself permanently at Florence under the special protection of the pious Duchess Eleonora di Toledo.

The times were changed, too, in Italy, since the days of Tullia's youth. Life in Rome, and hence in a somewhat less degree also in the other centres of the peninsula, was very different under Popes Paul IV. and Pius IV., from what it had been under Leo X., Clement VII., or Paul III. Devotion was now the *mode*, especially in courts. Princes had begun to understand, that the cause of despotism was bound up with that of sacerdotal tyranny; and that reform in matters ecclesiastical went hand in hand with freedom in matters secular. Popes and kings had become aware, that their fight against mankind could only be carried

on successfully by strict offensive and defensive alliance. Hence orthodox piety was one of the surest roads to court favour. And thus considerations of all sorts united in pointing out to Tullia the expediency of quitting *La Bohème*, and becoming at once a respectable member of society, and a pattern of propriety.

Literature, however, of a courtly sort was held in much favour at the court of Cosmo, who founded academies and kept historians in his pay, to set him and his doings before posterity in a proper point of view. Tullia, therefore, in quitting the "pays de la Bohème," did not leave her muse behind her. On the contrary, her most important work was the production of this period of her life.

"Guerrino il Meschino" is a poem consisting of some thirty thousand lines, in thirty-six cantos of octave rhyme. The poetess states in her preface, that it is a versification of a Spanish original; an assertion which has given some trouble to bibliographers; for the story of Guerrino was popular in Italian prose long before the time of Tullia, and has indeed continued so, quite independently of her poetical version, to such a degree as to have afforded the subject of popular dramatic representation within the present century. Some importance has been attached to the question of its origin from the circumstance of its having been supposed to have suggested to Dante some part of the plan of his poem.

In an article on Dantescan literature, by M. Charles Labitte, in the 31st vol. of the second series of the *Révue des Deux Mondes*, he says, that "it has been maintained that Dante took directly from the old romance of 'Guerrino il Meschino' the subject and

the entire plan of his work. The date and the origin of the Guerrino, whether French or Provençal, are uncertain. . . . Hell is represented in it with the concentric form attributed to it by Dante, and Satan in both cases occupies the lowest part of the abyss. But it would be easy to show, despite the weighty authority of Pelli and of Fontanini, that the romance of Guerrino, so popular in the fifteenth century, is at least in its present form posterior to the Divine Comedy."

The fact is, however, that the idea of describing the adventures and sights encountered by a denizen of this world, or his travels through the world beyond the tomb, was exceedingly common in the century preceding Dante; and we find it reproduced in many different forms. And in all probability the story of Guerrino was popular long before it was written in the earliest shape in which we now have it.

The contents are of the ordinary staple of the romances of chivalry, unreadable enough for the most part. Crescimbeni declares * that the story is comparable to the Odyssey; while the more critical Mazzuchelli finds it "full of improbabilities, utterly contrary to history, chronology, and geography." †

Tullia's own view of her work, and her account of her motives in writing it, as set forth in her preface, are more to our present purpose. She begins by observing, that whereas all other pleasures either require the ministration of others, whose services we may not always be able to command, or are of such a nature as to be of short duration, like eating and

* Istor. di Volg. Poesia, vol. i. p. 341.
† Vol. i. p. 930.

drinking, or again bring with them dangers, expense, anxiety, and often mischief,—such as travelling, gambling, love-making, and such-like; reading alone is open to none of these inconveniences. Accordingly everybody above the lowest classes, says Tullia, reads now-a-days; and for women it is a resource especially useful and necessary, as Giovanni Boccaccio well knew, who informed us that he wrote almost entirely for the ladies. And had he only done one thing which he has left undone, and left undone one which he has done, his book would have been all that could have been desired. The first is to have put his tales into verse, which it cannot be doubted, says our poetess, is much more pleasant reading than prose. The other matter, which should have been avoided, is the quantity of "improper, indecent, and truly abominable things which are found from one end to the other of that book, in which no respect is paid to the honour of married women, nor of widows, nor of nuns, nor of secular damsels, nor of godmothers or godfathers, nor of friends, nor of priests, nor of friars, and, lastly, not even of bishops. So that it is truly a thing to wonder at that not only princes and superiors, but even thieves and felons, who call themselves Christians, can bear to hear his name mentioned, without signing themselves with the Holy Cross, and stopping their ears as against the most horrible and abominable thing that human ears could listen to. Yet so utterly corrupt is our nature, that not only is this book not avoided as an abomination, but every one runs after it."

Poor dear Tullia's virtue fresh taken up from grass, runs away with her a little! It is quite clear that

there are to be no more cakes and ale for any body, now that her junketing days are done!

She goes on to complain that all the romance writers, "even Ariosto himself," are disfigured by the same fault. She therefore, intent on finding some pleasant reading with no offence in it, met with this "exquisite book in the Spanish tongue, in which so many and various matters are treated of, that I assuredly know of none so pleasant in that language or any other. And then it is throughout perfectly chaste, perfectly pure, thoroughly Christian; and neither in the facts nor diction is there anything which any respectable and holy man or woman, married or single, nun or widow, may not read at all hours."

This treasure of a book therefore she determines to clothe with verse, the only thing wanting to make it perfect. It is for you therefore, "my gentle readers, to accept my good intention, and give all the praise to God alone, from whom comes all good, and to whom alone I am thankful for the great grace which has so enlightened me while yet not over-ripe, but youthful and fresh in age,—*in questa mia età non ancor soverchiamente matura, ma giovenile e fresca*,—as to bring back my heart to Him, and make me wish and strive, as far as in me lies, that all others, both men and women, may have like grace."

How delightfully the vein of natural womanhood crops out from under the thick overlying strata of propriety and devoutness! Poor Tullia! And to think of that wretch of a biography-man Zilioli, talking of "half-old-womanhood in years and in appearance," in speaking of a period anterior to this!

It might be supposed, on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief, that our Sappho sanctified,

animated with the excellent dispositions she manifests, would have avoided the faults she so furiously inveighs against. But that hallucination of her "not yet over-ripe age" would seem to have come upon her so strongly at times, as to have caused her to think the old thoughts and talk the old *Bohème* talk of her youth, in total forgetfulness of her present character, and all the promises of her preface. Mazzuchelli, in noticing this preface of hers, briefly and gravely remarks that certain passages of her poem, which he refers to, show that she has not attained the object she aimed at. It is, however, difficult to say what Tullia may have deemed proper reading for nuns and damsels at all hours. And if any English readers wish to judge of this for themselves, they may be satisfied by consulting the tenth canto of the poem; which contains matters that would among us be considered very undesirable reading for any section of the community at any hours.

To this reformed period of Tullia's life belongs also her dialogue "On the infinity of Love." It professes to be the report of a conversation that took place at her house in Florence, between herself and Benedetto Varchi, the historian and philosopher; and it no doubt in a great degree resembles the style of talk affected at the quasi-academic meetings of friends, which constituted the then fashionable form of social intercourse. It was first printed at Venice in 1547, in a small volume of some two or three hundred pages, with a preface by Girolamo Muzio, one of Tullia's most fervent and most constant adorers. He commences his preface by drawing a distinction between spiritual and material love, and declares that his affection for the authoress of the

dialogue is purely of the former kind. The work was sent to him, he says, by Tullia, without any idea of publication; and he had ventured to send it to the press without her knowledge. In the manuscript, as it reached him, the name "Sabina" stood as Varchi's interlocutor, in the place of "Tullia;" "doubtless," says Muzio, "because the writer's modesty was shocked at writing in her own name all the praises that Varchi is made to bestow on her in the course of the work." But he, Muzio, thinking that a feigned name could not with propriety be introduced in conjunction with the real name of Varchi, had decided on inserting the name of Tullia.

The production itself is a truly wonderful proof of the amount of difference that may exist between the average cultivated human intellect in one age and country and in another. This dialogue on the infinity and necessary durability of love, is one of hundreds of similar writings on that and other such subjects, which constituted the fashionable and much-enjoyed light reading of the educated classes in Italy at that period. To a modern English reader, no dryest blue book, no trashiest novel could appear so perfectly unreadable. The subject presented to a man of our day as the theme for an essay, might seem somewhat stiff and formal—*banal*, as the French say; but he would see at once, that the consideration of it might lead to the discussion of several questions closely touching some of the most interesting and important problems of social polity. But Tullia and her contemporaries saw nothing of the kind.

Nor let any saucy scapegrace imagine, that any experiences of the different attributes of Eros and Anteros, which the authoress may be supposed to

have acquired in the course of her life, are in any wise brought to bear on any part of her theme. * The dialogue might be innocently, if not profitably, read by any of those damsels and nuns for whom Tullia specially prepared her less immaculate poem. There are scholastically constructed argumentations, quotations from Petrarch and Dante, syllogisms, with talk of major and minor premise, and plenty of references to Aristotle, a little horribly *fade* and mild raillery between the lady and Varchi, and words—words—words, with such weary going backwards and forwards over the same dry places paved with them, as would make an admirable substitute for the treadmill in the case of felons of education.

There are no means of knowing for how many years Tullia continued her pleasant life of literary occupation and society, with all that was most cultivated and agreeable in Florence. She would have published other things on which she was engaged, says Zilioli, "had she not been surprised by death before she had reached that extreme old age, which Pietro Angelio of Barga, a most able astrologer, had promised her, possibly with a view of acquiring favour in her eyes."

Her patroness, Eleonora of Toledo, who despite many virtues and good qualities, was odious to the Florentines, on account of her "insopportabile gravità," says Litta,* because, that is, she was with her Spanish seriousness and gravity an intolerable bore to the light-hearted Tuscans,—died in 1562. And in all probability Tullia did not survive her many years.

The name of Tullia d'Aragona lives in the pages

* Fam. Med. Tavola, 14.

of Italian literary historians, and in the memory of educated Italians as a poetess. But she would not have merited presentation to the English reader as such. As a remarkable social phenomenon, the product of the social soil of the sixteenth century under the sun of the *renaissance*, the story of her life, imperfect as it is, is well worth notice.

OLYMPIA MORATA.

(1526—1555.)

CHAPTER I.

Good Old Times in Ferrara—How a Pope's Daughter became a Duchess—Bygones were bygones—and Love was still the Lord of all.

A CERTAIN class of writers, probably among the most sincere and earnest of the defenders of the Catholic faith, have been driven by the social aspect presented by all those countries in which Catholicism has power, to admit, accept, and justify the absence of material, and even intellectual prosperity, as a necessary consequence of catholic views of life here and hereafter. Material prosperity, say these ascetics,—plenty to eat and to drink, good clothing, commodious habitations, life-embellishing arts, and ministrations of all sorts to corporeal well-being, are not the proper objects of man here on this earth. Nay, the wisest of mankind have in all ages, they say, recognised such things as highly inimical to the pursuit of that better aim, to which all human endeavour should tend. While the fatal consequences resulting from untrammelled intellectual culture, are among the surest and saddest teachings of human experience. That the true and

faithful fashioning of life therefore in accordance with the doctrines of a creed, the whole scope and tendency of which is the undivided pursuit of that higher and better aim, should be found unconducive to material and merely human intellectual advantages, is, they urge, not only what might reasonably be anticipated, but is a confirmatory proof of the correctness of those views, which it cannot be denied have made Catholic countries what they are.

Such doctrine, though little likely to be deemed conclusive by enlightened intelligence, or acceptable by the popular mind, has at all events the advantage of moving the question into a strictly theological court, into which the economist, the historian, the moralist, the politician, and the philanthropist, are not obliged to follow it. For their purposes it is sufficient, that the tendency of Catholicism to produce poverty, squalor, ignorance, and depopulation, should be admitted and registered. And they may well afford, at this period of the world's history, to treat with a silent shrug, the theory of those, who declare that these things are preferable to enlightenment, abundance, and material prosperity.

But if it be indeed true, that intellectual and material decadence is the proof and guarantee of a people's spiritual advancement; if the desolating blight which marks unmistakeably every land overshadowed by the wings of the Roman Church, be indeed an indication of its ripeness for a better harvest than any to be garnered on this side of the grave; then assuredly may we expect to find the purest and brightest spiritual life ever yet manifested by a nation, among the happy populations —*fortunati nimium sua si bona norint*—subjected to the immediate sway of the successors of St. Peter. And

should any curious student of the *modus operandi* and results of ecclesiastical government, desire to know where he may advantageously examine such phenomena in their most unmitigated form and perfect development, he may be safely advised to bestow his researches on the city and district of Ferrara.

There, indeed, the lesson he is in search of, is so written, that he who runs, even though he speed on with the haste of the posting traveller, eager to leave the abomination of desolation behind him, may read it without fear of blundering. There indeed is a city and people unmistakably marked by Holy Mother Church, as her own; silence and solitude, decay, dilapidation, neglect, and sordid squallor, characterise the impress of her paternal hand. And yet more forcibly to point the moral of the spectacle, there remains sufficient traces of what Ferrara was in the young ungodly days of her lay government, to give all the force of contrast to her present condition. There is the gaunt frame of a city calculated to house four times the amount of its present population. The lofty walls of vast palaces enclose wide and spacious streets, over which the green weeds are growing, and a dead silence broods. In the centre is the moated castle of the old Dukes of Ferrara, now the monstrously disproportioned residence of the priest, who governs (!) Ferrara and its legation. Around this still lingers what little of life and movement is left in the paralysis-struck city. The more distant streets may be traversed from end to end without the sight of a living creature, save perhaps a group of half-naked mendicants basking in the sun, or the still more unpleasing figure of a capuchin friar, sauntering along with his wallet over his shoulder, on his daily

quest, like some unclean reptile of ill omen crawling among ruins which are its appropriate dwelling-place.

Such are the normal and necessary results as they lie developed and palpable before our eyes, of that system which was inaugurated at the period to which the subject of these pages belongs. But let ascetic theologians console themselves, and defend the issues of their handywork, as they may, it is undeniable, that, be they as sincere as they will, all such considerations are but after-thoughts. The production of a society vowed to apostolic poverty and heedlessness of the morrow, was not the object which the sixteenth century popes, and those misguided rulers who played into their hands, had in view. They intended to bring about very different issues. Yet this, which we see, was the only one in the long run possible, as the upshot of their doings. Divine providence so over-ruled the matter, quite in accordance with divine precedent, having very irreversibly laid down the law for the regulation of all such cases, at the time of man's first creation.

Previously to the inauguration of this fatal policy, the rule of the earlier dukes of Ferrara of the house of Este had aimed at, and in very considerable degree attained, quite other results. Beginning with old Borso the first duke, who was invested with that dignity in 1471, and who left behind him so good a name, that when in after and worser times, men grumbled in Ferrara,* they would say, "Ah, 'tis not now as in Duke Borso's days," down to his great nephew Hercules the Second, who ruled the duchy at the period to which our subject belongs; the

* Frizzi, Mem. per la Storia di Ferrara, vol. iv. p. 80.

Ferrarese princes had been very favourable specimens of the Italian sovereigns of those days.

As for good-old-times Borso, the just, though he had not the advantage of book-learning himself, he honoured it in others. The fact of his own deficiency in this respect, we gather from the amusingly frank avowal of a contemporary chronicler, who in a dedication of his book to his sovereign,* remarks that, "Fortune, ever the enemy of worth, has not willed, that to your other singular accomplishments should be added that of literature." From the records of his reign however, it would seem, that illiterate as he was, he must have had talents, that would make an invaluable chancellor of the exchequer. For the same historians, who give us the most glowing accounts of his magnificence assure us, that he never oppressed his subjects with unjust or grievous taxation. He dressed we are told, even when in the country, in brocade and cloth of gold; he never went without a chain about his neck of the value of seventy thousand ducats (!!), kept seven hundred magnificent horses in his stables, and dogs and falcons in proportion. Then his buildings were on a scale that might rival the doings of Napoleon the Third. But that collar! We have heard of the oppressive weight of the trappings of state, but little thought of the terrible extent of the reality. For seventy thousand ducats must be reckoned at the lowest calculation to be worth at the present day thirty-five thousand pounds, and to be equivalent to about two thousand two hundred and fifty pounds weight of gold. Now, admitting that nine-tenths of this value was represented by the ex-

* Frizzi, Mem. per la Storia di Ferrara, vol. iv. p. 80.

quisite workmanship of the celebrated Venetian goldsmiths, still we must suppose, poor Duke Borso to have walked about the world with upwards of two hundred weight of gold round his neck!

Borso's brother, Hercules the First, who succeeded to him in 1471, is also spoken of with high praise by the contemporary chroniclers.* They tell us, that his title to the dukedom was maintained against a collateral pretender by seventy thousand inhabitants of Ferrara. He signalised his accession by the remission of several taxes, which seems somewhat incompatible with the praises previously bestowed on Borso on that head; and still more so with the accounts we have of his own magnificent doings. For he also was a mighty builder both of palaces and villas for his own pleasure, and of improved and increased dwellings for that of his people. Towards the end of the century, the population of Ferrara, which we have already seen rated at seventy thousand, had become so largely increased, chiefly in consequence of the expulsion from Spain and Portugal of the Jews, who thronged in great numbers into Italy, and especially settled themselves at Ferrara under the then tolerant rule of its popular dukes, that a writer of the time† declares, that no dwelling was to be found there for money. Hercules, therefore, in 1492, undertook the herculean task of erecting buildings to such a number as to double the size of his capital.

The work was commenced on such a scale, that the cautious Venetian senators, his neighbours, were startled, and deemed it prudent to ask what was in-

* *Vide apud* Frizzi, Mem. Stor. di Ferrara, vol. iv. p. 184.

† Ancient Diary, cited by Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 164.

tended by such vast preparations for construction. Duke Hercules answered, that he was building houses for his subjects to live in, and the Queen of the Adriatic seems to have been contented with the reply. Various taxes were imposed, not on Ferrara only, but on the whole of the Duke's dominions, including Modena and Reggio, to supply the means of executing these works. But there is no indication to be found of their having been considered grievous or excessive. And we have no means of ascertaining whose property the newly-raised quarters of the city were considered when built. Did they become crown property, and thus enormously increase the already large means of which the princes of the house of Este disposed, independently of taxation? Or, as seems under the circumstances of the case hardly possible, were any accounts kept, and means adopted to make the proceeds of the new property available, in the shape of interest, to those who had contributed to their expense?

Next to his ruling passion for building, spectacles of all sorts, dramatic and others, and travelling, were the great delight of Hercules I. All these were costly pleasures; and we find that, in contradiction to the policy of the early days of his reign, want of money often induced him to lay heavy burthens on his subjects. Nevertheless, he had the art of making himself exceedingly beloved by his people. He never hoarded money, but spent it almost entirely among the citizens in making his court and capital the gayest and most splendid in Italy. It was always "festa," always carnival at Ferrara. "Tournaments, races of horses, of oxen, of asses, of girls and boys, shooting matches, and hunting parties succeeded each other

without interruption."* Then the good Duke would sally forth o' nights, and looking in quite unexpectedly take pot luck at supper with his loving subjects, in genuine Caliph Haroun Alraschid fashion.

Neither then nor at any other time was any court in Italy so thronged with men of learning and genius. For such, come they from what nation they might, there was always a warm welcome, and assistance, if they needed it. Then again the court of Ferrara was a noted resort of noble knights, who had differences touching their honour, to put to the arbitrement of the sword. For the sport-loving Duke was always ready to afford a tilting-ground, and the countenance of his august presence to champions in need of such accommodation. Many accordingly were the celebrated duels which came off at Ferrara, to the infinite satisfaction and diversion of the Duke and his subjects. Then as for his piety, if all the churches and monasteries he built were not enough to vouch for it, says Frizzi, piously, it is abundantly proved by his habit of going to various churches accompanied by all his famous band, there to have mass celebrated with all the attractions of music. Besides, in holy week, he used to wash the feet of hundreds of old men! What more would you have?

His son Alphonso, born in 1476, succeeded him in 1505. This prince's first wife, Anna Strozzi, having died in 1477, he married in 1501 the too celebrated Lucrezia Borgia. That such a marriage could have been thought possible, that it should have been proposed to the court of Ferrara, and accepted by Alphonso and his father, are facts which very

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 217.

strikingly set before us the vastness of the difference between the habits of thought and feeling of an Italian of the fifteenth and an Englishman of the nineteenth century. The consideration of a gulf of separation so impassable warns us of the exceeding difficulty of so sympathising with the men of that time and country, as to form any tolerably fair appreciation of their conduct; not merely in the sense of morally judging of it, with reference to the responsibilities of the individual, with which wholly impossible task we have fortunately no need to meddle; but in the sense of comprehending the bearing and weight of the motives which regulated it.

Lucrezia was twenty-five at the time of this her fourth marriage. What the tenour of her life had been, and the nature of the scenes she had passed through, the English reader is probably in some small degree aware; in a very small degree, unless indeed he happens to have sought out in the folio Latin columns of the contemporary chroniclers the details of abominations wholly unreproducible in any modern page. And yet this woman, whose moral nature, if judged according to our habits of thought, must be deemed to have been saturated with impurity, and hopelessly depraved and destroyed, is proposed and accepted as the wife of a prince, whose character stands higher than that of any of his contemporaries of the sovereign houses of Italy, and whose family was already remarkable among them for enlightenment and respectability!—accepted to be the mother of his children, and the means of transmitting his unsullied name and crown!

A very noteworthy instance of the extraordinary incompatibility of the moral feelings of those times

with our own, or of our imperfect appreciation of the exact value of the terms used, occurs in a passage of the "Relazione,*" of the Venetian ambassador Paolo Cappello, who, returning from Alexander the Sixth's Court in 1500, tells the Senate that Lucrezia is "prudent and liberal"—*savia e liberale* — and adds within five lines, without further remark, that it is said, that she had an incestuous connection with her brother!†

But perhaps the most extraordinary and interesting fact of Lucrezia's history, is that after her marriage with Alphonso, not only was her life blameless, but her conduct was such as to merit and secure her high-minded husband's affection and esteem, and in all respects to do honour to her station. Her marriage with Alphonso therefore divides, as by an abruptly and suddenly drawn line, the life of Lucrezia into two portions, the earlier all black with atrocities and abominations unspeakable, the latter shining with purity and many noble virtues. Such a statement has been deemed to involve an absolute moral impossibility; and Roscoe has been induced by the consideration of it, to attempt a denial of the charges which have made Lucrezia Borgia's name a by-word of infamy.

"If the Ethiopian cannot change his skin," he writes,‡ "nor the leopard his spots, how are we to conceive it possible that a person, who had during so many years of her life been sunk into the lowest depths of guilt and infamy could at once emerge to respectability and virtue? The history of mankind furnishes no instances of such a rapid change."

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, ser. xi. vol. iii. p. 11.

† Note 1. Appendix, on Lucrezia Borgia; Life of Leo X.

But Roscoe's elaborate though weak defence signally breaks down. It would extend what has already undesignedly assumed the proportions of a digression far too much to enter into an examination of the historical evidence on the subject. It will be sufficient to observe, that Roscoe's "chivalrous" attempt, as somebody with infinite absurdity somewhere calls it, was abundantly demolished by the "Edinbro' Review," January, 1806, at the time. And further evidence than was then accessible to the reviewer, has since been made available to establish the historical certainty, that the earlier portion of Lucrezia's life was in truth all that it has been ordinarily supposed to have been. On the correctness of the account of the latter portion, as stated above, no doubt has ever been cast. So that we in reality have this whitewashed-black-a-moor phenomenon before us, to make of it what we may.

Gibbon disposes* of the matter by observing, that "perhaps the youth of Lucrezia had been seduced by example; perhaps she had been satiated by pleasure; perhaps she was awed by the authority of her new parent and husband," Alphonso, and his father Hercules. But the moral philosopher will hardly deem any of these suppositions a satisfactory explanation of the facts before him. And a more serious consideration of them will perhaps lead him to the conclusion, that whatever of strangeness or novelty they may present, is rather matter for the historian's study than for his own.

Well convinced of the reality of the impossibility alleged, that any human being should pass suddenly

* Antiq. of the House of Brunswick.

from such a moral state as that indicated to our judgments by the facts of Lucrezia's early career, to such an ethical condition as that presumed to accompany her later life, while he in no wise seeks to invalidate the historical evidence of the case, he will yet deny such change to have been accomplished. Knowing how large a portion of the spiritual deterioration arising from any outward acts, is dependent on the degree to which the conscience of the agent is enlightened, he will deny that Lucrezia's moral state during the first part of her life was such as we are apt to conceive that it needs must have been. Aware how very much of the difficulty of turning from evil to good, consists in the arduousness of the struggle to rise from infamy to good repute, he will assert, that Lucrezia could not have been sunk in that depth of infamy to which we suppose that the admitted facts of her conduct must necessarily have consigned her.

For the moralist there will be nothing new or striking in all this. The interesting significance of the phenomenon is for the historian. That restoration and *rehabilitation*, it would appear, which would be impossible in the nineteenth, was possible in the fifteenth century. The gulf which would now be wholly impassable, did not then yawn so wide as to make crossing it impossible. Here is to be found the explanation, and herein consists the historical interest of the facts of the case. The finely organised moral sense of the nineteenth century would have been wholly killed by similar wounds, and the spiritual destruction of the individual would have been irretrievable. But the lower, coarser, more rudimentary moral sense of the "ages of faith" was not wholly

killed by such injuries. And the extraordinary social phenomenon of the marriage is only explicable in the same manner. The moral reprobation, which among us would doom such an offender to the isolation of a leper, did not exist in that age and country. When the aged Pontiff Paul III. characterised the even more horrible atrocities of his son Piero Luigi Farnese as juvenile indiscretions, though the respectable world of the sixteenth century was revolted, the discrepancy between the moral judgment of Heaven's vice-gerent and that of his faithful people, was very far from being as monstrous as that between his and our nineteenth century English feeling. The career of Lucrezia was also doubtless deemed highly reprehensible by her contemporaries. Indeed we find it made the subject of invective and epigram. But it is clear, that none of the horror and the loathing attached to it with which we now regard it. It is evident that she was not deemed hopelessly and irrecoverably soiled and destroyed by it.

And such proofs of the enormous amount of the advance in the moral sense of mankind, which has been accomplished in the world, that according to theologians, has been staggering onwards amid tottering creeds and ever-multiplying heresies towards a religious cataclysm, are among the most important fruits of historical study.

When the marriage was first proposed to the court of Ferrara by Alexander VI., both Alphonso and his father Hercules were extremely averse to it*. The Pope induced Louis XII. to use his influence with the Ferrarese princes; and the king deputed a posse

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 203.

of churchmen, the Cardinal of Rohan, the Archdeacon of Chalon, and the Archbishop of Narbonne, to persuade Hercules and his son of the desirableness of such an union. Their arguments seem to have consisted entirely in setting forth the dangers that would arise to Ferrara from refusal. The father was thus first brought over. Alphonso still expressed the greatest reluctance. But when his father declared, that under the pressure of the circumstances, he would himself, were it not for his advanced age, accept the hand of Lucrezia, the son consented.

The bribes administered by the Pope in the shape of dower, were very considerable. The investiture of his Duchy, which had hitherto been conferred by the Apostolic see for three generations only, was made perpetual. The tribute payable on account of it was reduced from four thousand ducats to one hundred florins. An hundred thousand ducats was also paid down in gold; and the bride carried with her to Ferrara the value of an hundred and seventeen thousand ducats in precious stones and jewelry; besides a proportionate amount of property in dresses and furniture. And it was especially provided in the marriage contract, that, in case of Lucrezia's death, Alphonso should not be called on to restore any portion of this property.*

The marriage was celebrated at Rome on the 29th December, 1501, Alphonso's brother Don Ferrante standing proxy for the bridegroom.

On the 1st of February the bride reached Ferrara, where the preparations for receiving her may be said to have been nearly the sole occupation of the entire

* Diario Ferrarese. Anon. apud Muratori, tom. xxiv, p. 399.

city, during the interval between the marriage and her arrival in her new home. And although Donna Lucrezia and her extraordinary marriage have already too much lengthened these notices of the court of Ferrara, the only scope of which is to give the reader some idea of the scene on which the subject of these pages is to appear, yet some of the details of these preparations, as recorded by the contemporary diarist above cited, afford so curious a peep at the manners and customs of the period, that the somewhat undue extension of a merely prefatory chapter will probably be pardoned for the sake of the interest attaching to them.

On the 22nd of December, the diarist notes, that fourteen bushels of comfits were already prepared, counting up to that night, and that the ducal confectioners would continue to increase the store with all diligence. It has been seen already how large a part preparations of sugar played on all such occasions.

Then we have a very curious illustration of a custom, traces of which still remain among the people in several parts of Italy. On the night before the Epiphany, children are in these days wont to hang up a stocking, or some other such receptacle outside their chambers, into which their friends put little presents, which the child finds in the morning, and considers, or makes fun of pretending to consider, as the gifts of the fairy "Beffana;" for such is the popular conception of the meaning of the term Epiphany! Now see of how mighty a wallet is the poor child's stocking the dwindled representative. The enormous expense of the wedding preparations made a few "Beffana" presents especially welcome to the young prince

Alphonso at the Epiphany tide of 1502. So at nightfall he rode forth accompanied by twenty-five horsemen, with drums and trumpets, and went through the city "per la sua ventura," in quest of fortune, or, as we might say, to see what luck would send him. "And he got for his fairing, 'di sua ventura,' three hundred head of oxen, an equal number of large cheeses, upwards of a thousand couple of capons, and other things to the estimated value of a thousand ducats."

In truth, the Beffana was something like a good fairy in the good old times, especially when a gallant young prince sought her favour!

But the Beffana could not supply all that was needed. For on the following Sunday came out the list of appointments to offices for the year. "And every man in the list paid for his place through the nose." Bonifacio Ariosto and Battista di Zilioli, among others, paid an immense sum for the post of commissioners of customs. And Tito Strozzi, the Latin poet, was continued in his place of judge, to the great discontent of all the people, "but it cost him very dear."

Besides all this, the ducal palace was open to all loyal subjects, who came with anything eatable or drinkable to assist their sovereign in the coming tremendous call on his hospitality. It was counted that up to the evening of the 27th, among other things, fifteen thousand head of poultry had been brought in as presents. Indeed the zeal of the Ferrarese outran the necessity of the case, great as it was; for a few days later we find that a large quantity of game and poultry had to be thrown into the Po, because it had become unusable.

From the 25th to the end of the month all Ferrara

was hard at work adorning the streets, levelling places that were uneven, putting up scaffolding for seats where the bride would pass on her entry, preparing accommodation for the five thousand three hundred horses which were expected, contriving as far as possible means of lodging the "incredible number" of strangers, who were continually arriving to witness the festival; putting new marble steps to the altar in the cathedral; and, lastly, in erecting over the door of the palace a blazonry of the Pope's arms, together with those of the King of France, and those of the most illustrious House of Este, "with angels and hydras, and other exquisitely beautiful ornaments."

But a most provoking thing was, that in the midst of all this bustle we had to send out a party on horseback to meet a certain French cardinal, who was coming to Ferrara on his way from the King of France to the Pope. And they had their ride for nothing, "for his most reverend lordship determined to stay the night where he was, because his most reverend lordship had not got his clothes with him."

At last on the 2nd of February the bride and her immense cortège, increased by the Duke and the bridegroom, together with all that was either noble or learned in Ferrara, who had gone out to meet them, made their triumphal entry into the city. Alphonso, whose aversion to the match has been mentioned, was more than reconciled to his lot by the sight of the bride,* whose rare beauty at once captivated him. She passed the night of the first of February at a villa outside of the city, in order to make her ceremonial entry on the following day, when

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 207.

according to courtly etiquette she was to be duly presented to her bridegroom with infinite laborious co-operation of bishops and benedictions, trumpeters, heralds, court-ushers, and bell-ringers. And doubtless when the appointed moment came, both the lady and gentleman performed their part of the show, and made their first acquaintance with each other in the presence of assembled Italy with all propriety. But it did so happen that a certain lynx-eyed "gentleman of the press," (who was early afoot in the exercise of his profession on the morning of the great day of the 2nd, picking up stray facts to present them,—if not all hot to "our readers" at their breakfast tables in a second edition of the Ferrara Times, yet embedded fossil-like in the vast strata of Muratori's colossal folios, to us and all future generations) did see a figure, whom he perfectly well recognised as the Prince Alphonso, quietly slipping out from a side entrance of the villa, which held the bride, and hastening back to the city to prepare himself for his part in the coming pageant.

Early it must have been that "our reporter" was guilty of this professional indiscretion, for both dame and cavalier had much to do in preparation for their day's work. She had to dress her head with a cap and jewels valued at fifteen thousand ducats, and her feet with sandals worth two thousand. She had to get on her state dress of gold brocade and black satin, heavy with such a vast quantity of precious stones that the value of it was incalculable. Thus accoutred she had to get upon a white jennet entirely covered with gold brocade, under a canopy supported by all the doctors of the University of Ferrara, and manage him as best she might, despite his starting (duly

chronicled) every time the salvos of cannon were fired. Last, and by no means probably least, she had to get her following of ladies of honour stowed in sixteen carts.

As for Alphonso, he had only to put on a cloak all of plates of beaten gold, of the value of eight thousand ducats, and hang chains about his neck to the value of almost as much more, then to mount his black charger, and ride forth at the head of all the Ferrarese nobility.

Then followed Pantagruelian feastings and junketings for several days; in which the usual order seems to have been to dance all day, and after the feast at night, to see "comedies" and "Moresche" or morris dances. Then there were most extraordinary feats of rope-dancing. Among others, a certain youth—*uno zovene nominato cingano*—probably "zingaro" or the gypsy, passed along a cord stretched across the whole *piazza* of Ferrara, from the summit of the bishop's residence to the summit of the ducal palace, frightening all the ladies by pretending to fall when half way across, and catching himself by hooking his foot on the cord!

After having narrated all that the Duke's lieges did for their sovereign on this grand occasion, it would not be fair to quit the subject, without recording what the good Duke did for them in return. On the morning of 23rd, all Ferrara was gladdened by a proclamation made with sound of trumpet throughout the city, to the effect that his Highness had obtained from Pope Alexander, permission for all the subjects of the Duke of Ferrara to eat eggs and milk on all days whatsoever, no further dispensation being needed than that signified by the present proclamation!

So old Duke Hercules was laid in the family vault in the early days of 1505, not unlamented by his people, leaving behind him a favourable old-King-Cole sort of reputation, as the most junketing cake-and-ale loving sovereign of his day. But he had pretty well seen the last of the good cake-and-ale times in Italy, for many a long year to come. His son Alphonso had his lot cast in very different days.

Italy begins to be overrun by the troops of the most Catholic Emperor, and the most Christian King; and famine and pestilence follow in their wake. Ferrara is afflicted by both scourges. And we catch a glimpse * of the young duke striving at the opening of his reign to do his duty by his subjects, by starting off himself in quest of corn. Carrying with him good store of gold, he takes several of those huge ungainly vessels, half ship half barge, such as may be still seen on the rivers and canals of the Delta of the Po, goes to buy corn in Venice, and returns with his fleet laden, with wretched stuff indeed, and bought at an enormous price, but most welcome to starving Ferrara.

Then comes the pestilence, against which no ducal treasures avail aught. Such general provisions, as fear and the rude science of the time dictate, are enforced. Infected houses are shut up absolutely,—none permitted to enter or come out from them. The great convent of Franciscans is thus closed upon its wretched inmates. The University is shut up; and all tribunals of whatsoever kind suspend their business. But in five months the deaths amount to six thousand; while other four thousand have saved themselves by flight.

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 220.

But these are only the beginnings of misfortune. That terrible and indomitable old man, Julius II., was on the papal throne;—a pope, who really does seem to have had some idea of doing his duty as Heaven's vicegerent on earth, on the theory that this was most effectually to be accomplished by crying war to the knife against all who withheld from St. Peter, dues, titles, or dominions, that should, could, or might be his. Ferrara occupied a singularly provocative position on the map to a Holy Father of this temperament. And what could be easier than to find at Mother Church's need some flaw to a feudal title, among the forgotten deeds of ecclesiastical archives, carefully hoarded, *ad hoc*. Besides, if there were nothing else to be said, the Duke makes salt in the marshes of Comacchio, to the damage of the apostolical trade in that article; and is therefore hereby excommunicated, and declared deposed from his Duchy, and his subjects released from their allegiance!

A very hard struggle had Alphonso to hold his own against all the spiritual and carnal weapons of the Church. It must be admitted, that the latter seem to have troubled him by far the most. And more than once it appeared as if he must have been overwhelmed by the superiority of the force against him. But partly by his own military talents, partly by the aid of the French, and partly by good fortune, he won through, till the death of Julius allowed him, and the rest of the world, a short breathing time of repose.

Not that his difficulties with Mother Church were at an end. Leo X., though as mild a mannered Pope as ever launched a curse, had no intention of aban-

doning all the Church's claims on a vassal in disgrace. He relieved him from the excommunication, and permitted him to hold Ferrara, but still maintained a claim on Modena, and made good his hold on that city.

In 1519, Alphonso lost, and as it would seem, bitterly regretted, his wife Lucrezia. "Her husband and his subjects," writes Frizzi,* "all loved her for her gracious manners and for her piety, to which," as Giovio says, "having long before abandoned all worldly vanities, she wholly dedicated herself. She used to spend the morning in prayer, and in the evening, would invite the ladies of Ferrara to embroidery-working parties, in which accomplishment she greatly excelled. Her liberality to the poor, and to men of letters, which generally means one and the same thing," says Frizzi, "was especially notable."

Clement VII., if not so terrible an adversary as Julius II., was one quite as difficult to deal with. Promises made only to delude, negotiations entered on with no intention that they should lead to anything, treaties made only to be broken, a dexterous playing off of one potentate against another;—these were the arts by which Clement sought to steer his devious and trimming course among the difficulties of the time; and which at last landed him a prisoner in his own fortress of St. Angèlo, while his and the world's capital was being sacked beneath his eyes. In this predicament Clement had by his duly authorised representative, Cardinal Cibo, in consideration of Alphonso's joining the French King in a league against the Emperor, conceded all the points in

* Vol. iv. p. 261

dispute between them. The investiture of Ferrara was to be renewed and confirmed; all claim of the Apostolic See to Modena, Reggio, &c., was to be abandoned; Ippolito the Duke's second son was to have a Cardinal's hat and the bishopric of Modena; and Alphonso was to make as much salt at Comacchio as he pleased.

But hardly was the treaty signed before the Pope escaped from St. Angelo to Orvieto, and thereupon unblushingly refused to perform any one of the promises made. And Alphonso, who had incurred great risk of the Emperor's displeasure by performing his share of the bargain, had to turn about with all possible speed, break with the King of France, and hope by humble excuses to be able to make it up again with Charles.

Thus in Ferrara, as indeed throughout Italy, things were very different from what they had been during the latter half of the fifteenth century. Men might with some show of reason talk of the good old times, and look out on those around them with misgiving and despondency. And yet the Phœnix was burning herself as usual; only, as must be admitted, with more than ordinary amount of pestilential stench and stifling smoke,—smoke so stifling, so pestilential, that but few of those, who had to draw their life-breath, as best they might, in the midst of it, attained to any remotest guess that all this so sulphureous smother, and confused darkness of the air, was in truth but caused by that Phœnix burning, and preparatory for a purer atmosphere when it was accomplished. Few in any age can gain such Pisgah-glimpse of the coming time; fewest in that of which this writing treats.

But of those few our Olympia, as it is hoped the reader will see reason to believe, was one. Yet that terrible burning time,—such a Phœnix burning as the world has once and once only seen since—was but on the eve of beginning in the scene on which Olympia had to appear, at the time of her appearance. Her mortal career had to be passed in the midst of the very densest smoke-clouds of the funeral pyre.

Easy for us, looking back over the traversed maze with chart in hand, to understand the plan of it! Easy enough to talk of renaissance and glorious morning-tide spring of human thought! To those in the thick of the sweltering struggle, it was as the eve of dissolution and universal cataclysm.

CHAPTER II.

Troublous new times in Ferrara — How a French King's daughter became a Duchess—Bygones were aught but bygones—and Mitre and Cowl were lords of all.

PREVIOUSLY to this celebrated era of "renaissance," all the business of education, such as it was, had necessarily been in the hands of the clergy. But the well-known circumstances which at the beginning of the sixteenth century led to a new zeal for the study of the languages of ancient Greece and Rome, led also to the creation of a totally new class of teachers. The most eminent professors of the new learning were men, whose position made it necessary that their acquirements should be made a means of gaining a livelihood. And they became therefore for the most part professional teachers. They were also generally laymen. A body of lay pedagogues was a new thing in the world; and surely one of no small significance. For though these men professed simply to give instruction in the Greek or in the Latin tongue and literature, not to educate their pupils, yet the mass of idea, unstamped by the ecclesiastical mint, which was necessarily thus circulated, must have exercised an influence, which has perhaps not been estimated at its worth, in inquiries into the causes of the mental tendencies of that period.

Among the number of learned laymen, thus independently exercising the profession of teacher, we find a certain Peregrino or Pellegrino Morato, a native of Mantua, established at Ferrara early in the sixteenth century. He had, we are told, many of the nobility of Ferrara for his pupils; and had already acquired considerable reputation by his teaching in several cities of Italy.* All that has reached us concerning him concurs to produce the impression that Morato must have been an estimable and worthy man; among which testimonies may perhaps be reckoned the fact of his continued poverty, notwithstanding his success as a teacher, and the lofty position of some among his pupils.

The most noted scholars and teachers of that age would seem to have led almost invariably wandering lives. They are heard of now holding a chair in one university and now in another, or attached to several of the princely houses of Italy in succession. And such appears to have been the early life of Morato. But at Ferrara he fixed himself more permanently, and soon anchored himself there in a manner, which made "La gran Donna del Po," as Tassoni calls that city, his home; and the centre of all this world's joys and sorrows for the remainder of his life. There he married, and became the father of five children, of whom Olympia appears to have been the eldest. There also he formed close and durable friendships with most of the learned men, of whom a remarkable band were gathered together in the court and university of Ferrara.

Among these, one of the most notable for his varied

* C. Secundi Curionis Epist., lib.

acquirements as well as for the closeness of his intimacy with Morato, was Celio Calcagnini, who occupied the chair of "belle lettere" in the university of his native city. Antiquarian, mathematician, astronomer, poet, scholar, and critic, Calcagnini was one of the most encyclopædic men in an age, when students still dreamed of mastering the "omne scibile." The numerous letters printed among his works prove his friendship with Morato to have been of the most intimate kind. And, if these letters had fortunately preserved their dates, instead of being printed in a confused mass, we should have had the means of ascertaining much more accurately than is now possible, the leading events of his friend Morato's life.

Alexander Guarini the grammarian, professor in the university and secretary to the Duke; Giglio Gregorio Giraldi, one of the most eminent Greek scholars of his day, a man of vast erudition and the first writer of any value on the ancient mythology; Bartolomeo Ricci, the learned but amusingly vain-glorious and quarrelsome scholar and critic, whose comedy in Italian prose entitled "the Nurses" is reckoned by Quadrio among the best in the language, and who was brought to Ferrara in 1539, on the recommendation of Calcagnini, to be tutor to Duke Hercules' son Alphonso, then six years old; the two brothers Chilian and John Sinapi, Germans, who occupied the chairs of Greek and Medicine in the University of Ferrara, of whom the former was Olympia's master, and was regarded by her as a second father; and lastly, but bound to Morato and his family by a more intimate and closer friendship than any of the others enumerated, Celio Secondo Curione,—all these, with others of similar tastes and pursuits formed a society, which rendered

Ferrara at that time perhaps the most attractive and desirable residence for a scholar, of any city in Italy.

Another circumstance occurred not many years after Morato's first establishment in Ferrara, which very notably contributed to impress a special character on the learned society there congregated, and to make that city a rallying point for the free thought, which was beginning yeast-like to heave the surface of Italian life.

The difficulties of protecting his dominions from the encroachments and greed of the Church, which compelled Alphonso to be continually oscillating between the friendship of the Emperor, or of the French King, according to the ever shifting aspects of Italian affairs, and the preponderance of the danger imminent from one side or the other, necessitated in 1528 an alliance with the latter. And with this view a marriage was arranged between Hercules, who was to succeed his father Alphonso in the Duchy as second duke of that name, and Renée, daughter of Louis XII. Hercules, then just twenty years old, went to Paris, where the marriage was celebrated on the 28th of June, 1528, and brought home his bride in the November of that year.

And now again, as six and twenty years before, when Alphonso brought his Borgia home, there was to be a ceremonial entry of the heir apparent's bride. But times were changed. And Ferrara, both court and city, had other matters to think of besides gala processions and festivities. The clergy, and the university doctors indeed went out to meet her,* as in duty bound; and the citizens equally as in

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 307.

duty bound, hung out of their windows their gay-coloured silk rugs and curtains, as Italians do to the present day on the occasions when anything royal or divine has need of such glorification. But we hear of no preparations for Homeric feasting, nor of wonderful gold dresses, and dancing all day, and morris dances at night. The entry of Louis XII's daughter was a very tame affair. And then Renée herself was a very different person from the splendid Lucrezia, who captivated all eyes, as she sat superb in black and gold, on her proudly pacing steed. Renée on the contrary came in on a litter; for "this one was by no means handsome, as were the two Duchesses, who preceded her. On the contrary she was, according to a MS. record of that period, somewhat crooked. But this was compensated by her elevated mind, her intellect, her literary culture, and her great partiality for learned men." *

Alas! Poor Renée must have valued these good gifts far more highly than even those of her sex most rich in such are wont to do, if she would not in her own heart have bitterly denied the value of any such compensation! Lucrezia with a dower of infamy "compensated" by beauty, became the happy wife of an affectionate husband. Renée with her store of virtues, and rich intellectual qualities, found but a state prison, heart-ache, and an unloving lord in this exile from her native France.

And then that "elevated intelligence," which was to compensate for crookedness, was but little likely to contribute to the happiness of one in the position of Renée of France at the court of Ferrara. Elevated

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 307.

intelligence was a dangerous commodity just about that time in Italy! For we have already seen the tendency of men's minds in those days to think of things that it was far better not to think about at all; a tendency which it very soon became necessary to extinguish and trample out at whatever cost. Thus we find that Renée, not content with having studied "the learned tongues, history, literature, philosophy, mathematics, and even astrology," and "unable to bridle her fervid intellect, gave herself over to the study of theology, and to complete her misfortune selected for her instructor one of the most celebrated of the new-fangled teachers who then infested Europe,"* no other than one John Calvin. And the result was, that, whereas the beautiful and catholic Lucrezia was able,—juvenile indiscretions and ardour of pulse happily moderated and past—to spend her mornings in orthodox devotion performed *secundum artem*, and her evenings in embroidery, to such purpose as to have secured the good word of Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, and learned Doctors, and the final general approval of Mnemosyne in her official surplice and rochet,—poor Duchess Renée with her "elevated intellect," and unhappy improprieties in the matter of theological inquiry, is marked as a moral leper by the same consistent ecclesiastical Muse, and finally consigned to a worse limbo than that of their own sulphureous pages.

But it is not to be supposed that Renée came to her husband's court branded as a heretic; though we find that she forthwith established in her own apartments "a literary academy," or meeting of men

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 329.

of letters, which, we are told,* was "much for the honour of literature, but not at all for that of the catholic religion." Nor, though almost all of those learned men, whom she patronised, turned out later to be, as the historian says, tarred with the same brush, was the delicate orthodoxy of her husband Hercules offended by any ill savour of heresy at that time. For the Church-in-danger alarm bell had not yet rung in Italy. Clement VII. having quite enough to do to hold his own among the clashing of the perfectly material interests of quite satisfactorily catholic, but very unscrupulous princes, thought of nothing less than the smelling out of traces of heretical taint. And it needed something more appreciable by the ducal mind than speculations about justification by faith to stimulate its orthodoxy into activity.

So the Duchess for years after her marriage gathered around her the best minds in her little capital, and talked her own talk with them, unmolested and unsuspected.

Nor can it be concluded that Morato was not at this time imbued with the new opinions, from the fact, that he evidently stood well in the court society at Ferrara. In the absence of all ascertained dates to enable us to fix with precision the leading events of his life, we must content ourselves with concluding, that it must have been between the years 1520 and 1525, in all probability, that he first established himself in that city. We know that he there married a Ferrarese lady, and that his daughter Olympia was born there in 1526. Now it is clear from the letters of Calcagnini that he must about that time have adopted at least those

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 307.

doctrines on justification by faith, and on free-will, which a few years afterwards were stamped as heretical and visited with persecution. But nobody on the southern side of the Alps dreamed as yet that such opinions, must, or even might, lead to that dreaded consummation, separation from the Church. Morato was at this time a valued member of the learned society of Ferrara; and though doubtless a frequenter of those academic meetings in the apartments of the Duchess, which were afterwards discovered to have been so heretically pernicious, he was as yet well esteemed by the most unsuspectedly orthodox churchmen.

A little anecdote from the vast repertory of such supplied by the "quarrels of authors," may serve to show that the favourable opinion of Messer Peregrino Morato was no little valued among the set with whom he lived. The celebrated Pietro Bembo, who was a few years after this time called to the purple by Paul III., had passed some years at Ferrara in the early part of his life, and having formed friendships with most of the literary men there, never lost an opportunity of paying them a visit, and was thus intimate with all the knot among whom Morato lived. Now it seems that Bernardo Tasso, the father of the poet, who was secretary to the Duchess Renée, had somewhat maliciously written to Bembo that Morato had accused* him of plagiarising certain grammatical speculations, from one Francesco Fortunio. Upon which Bembo, writing in reply on the 27th May, 1529, manifests great anxiety to convince Morato that he is in error. "On the contrary," writes Bembo, "he stole these things from me, together with the very

* Altogether wrongfully, it should seem.

words as I had written them in a small work of mine before he could speak, much less write, badly as he does it. This work of mine he saw and had in his hands many days; and I am ready to show it to him (Morato) whenever he please; and he will then see whether I deserve to be thus branded and cut up by him. Besides, I can introduce him to several great personages worthy of all credit, who heard and learned from me all the matters in question, long before Fortunio took to teaching others what he does not know himself."* Bembo, ex-secretary to Pope Leo, and presently to be a Cardinal, stood very much higher in the social scale than the poor Ferrara schoolmaster; and would probably have cared for his mistaken accusation as little as for the obscure Fortunio's plagiarism, had not his standing in the world of letters given a very different value to his opinion.

Olympia thus passed the first seven years of her life in the tranquil prosperity of a humble home, maintained by the successful labour of its owner, and cheered by the intimate society of congenial friends. That the precocious child had already attracted the notice of the grave and learned seniors who frequented her father's house, is indicated by a passage in a letter from Calcagnini to Morato, when absent from Ferrara, bidding him "to kiss for him the little Muse, whose prattle was already so charming." And at a later date, when writing to her, and recalling his remembrances of her infancy, he says, that the language of the Muses was her earliest mother tongue, which she had imbibed together with the milk from the breast."†

* Opere di Bembo; Milano, 1810, vol. vii. p. 226.

† Letters of Calcagnini cited by Bonnet, in his Vie d' Olympia Morata, p. 27.

The absence of Morato from Ferrara, which gave rise to the former of these letters, occurred in 1533.* That it was involuntary, and regarded by him and his friends as a great misfortune, is certain. It is tolerably clear, also, that it was caused by the will of the Duke. But beyond this we know nothing. Tiraboschi supposed, with a confusion of dates and events, common to most of the Romanist writers, who ever seem to imagine, that heresy was always heresy, the same in 1533 as in 1553, that he was exiled for the heterodoxy of his religious opinions. But that historian admits, that he afterwards saw reason to change his opinion on this point.†

Whatever may have been the cause of a removal, which the nature of Morato's connection with Ferrara make him feel as an expatriation, it is certain that it lasted for six years,‡—the six years that carried Olympia from seven to thirteen years of age, a period in the life of a girl of the southern blood on the sunny side of the Alps, which may probably be equivalent to that included between the tenth and sixteenth year of a child of our more tardily developed race.

The nature of her home in Ferrara, and of the influences that surrounded it, have been indicated. But of those which had the forming of her character during these important years of exile, we know nothing. And Olympia's biographers, in dwelling on her progress under the eyes of her father's learned friends at Ferrara, and attributing to them, in great measure, the truly remarkable degree of classical scholarship to which she attained, seem to have too much forgotten the importance of this period, when she was withdrawn

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 359.

† Tiraboschi, tom. vii. p. 1716. ‡ Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 359.

from their instructions. The force of this will be more apparent, when we come to see the extent of her attainments at the time of her return, in her thirteenth year.

It is to the struggling father that this triumph of pedagogue workmanship must be chiefly ascribed. That these six years were years of difficulty and struggle to the poor scholar, who had to turn his classical lore into bread for his wife and increasing family, is sufficiently indicated by the wandering nature of the life in which they were passed. From Venice to Vicenza, and from Vicenza to Cesena,* the poor pedlar pedagogue had to hawk his learned wares, and drive a very uphill trade. For though learning in many cases enriched its professors in those days in such sort as might excite the envy of their successors in our own, this was always the result of princely patronage. That Jenkins in Belgrave Square received more than the value of a curacy is small comfort to starving flunkies out of place. Between living in clover as the retainer of some lay or ecclesiastical grandee, and finding it very difficult to live at all, there can have been hardly any middle path for a sixteenth-century scholar, whose erudition was his patrimony. And then again, though the poor scholar was a character well enough known through Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, a poor scholar with a wife and family was a modern anomaly in 1533. And such incumbrances fatally put him out of the way of profiting by any of those small aids which the charities of that day, in accordance with its modes of life, afforded towards keeping together the body and soul of many an indigent "clerk."

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 359.

But through all the vicissitudes of these hard six years, Morato pursued unflinchingly the dear object of his heart, to make his Olympia—the apple of his eye, whose precocious talents had already awakened all the pride and ambition of the pedagogue father's bosom—a perfect specimen of classical training.

Among the towns visited by Morato during these years of exile, was Vercelli, in Piedmont; and there he formed a friendship with one who was destined to exercise an important influence over his future life and that of Olympia. This was Celio Secondo Curione, whose acts of overt dissidence from the Church had even then made him an object of persecution. Having become wholly alienated from Rome by the study of the Bible, and of certain of the writings of Melancthon, he was about escaping into Germany, when he was arrested, and thrown into prison by the Bishop of Ivrea. At the intercession of a relative, he was released, on condition of entering a monastery. There he finally made the breach between himself and the Church irreparable, by an act of audacity, which seems to have been more calculated to produce a theatrical and epigrammatic effect, than to bring about any useful result. Having quietly one day removed the relics from the high altar of the convent church, he installed the Bible in their place; thus indicating, more significantly probably than he intended, the tendency of the new Church then springing into existence, to substitute a new idolatry, less gross perhaps than that which it strove to supplant, but equally destined to impede for long ages the progress of mankind to a higher and purer theology.

Having fled to escape the consequences of this daring practical protest, he committed, in Milan, about

1530, the yet more unpardonable outrage of marrying a wife. Being by this act finally cast adrift upon the world, with increased responsibilities and necessities, he sought to obtain wherewithal to live, by publicly teaching the learned languages and literature. He did this with such success, as to attain not only that, but a very wide-spread reputation also, under circumstances which made obscurity most desirable for his safety. Driven, accordingly, from his occupation by the pursuit of his enemies, and yielding to a strong desire to revisit his native Piedmont, he appears, while travelling in that direction, to have fallen in with Morato at Vercelli, and to have been received by his brother exile and scholar in his temporary dwelling.

They did not part till there had been time for a friendship of the most intimate kind to spring up between them. And though, doubtless, there was plenty of congenial conversation between them on topics of classical lore,—on the disputed authenticity of Cicero's rhetoric, or the right interpretation of a passage of Plato,—we may be very sure, that the talk which most served to bind them to each other was on far more burning questions; on subjects which it was dangerous to touch, but which it had already become impossible for their minds to leave unprobed,—subjects, in speaking of which, either felt in his heart, that each cautious word, that moved a beam of doctrine but a hair's-breadth, might bring down a whole superincumbent fabric of venerated creed-edifice in ruin; subjects, too, in the discussion of which, the man who poured light into his neighbour's mind, was thereby exposing him to danger in life and goods,—a danger proportioned to the temperament of the mind enlightened.

Morato was, it would seem, not formed in the martyr's mould. There is no reason to suspect him of hypocritical compliances or tergiversation. But there are some men, in whom truth so works, that it cannot lie hidden and dormant, who, despite all pains and penalties, must needs testify to it, and publish it. Of such, as has abundantly been seen, was Celio Curione. That Morato shared his convictions is certain. But he lived and died in peace in the city of his adoption.

But there was a third mind there present at these pregnant conversations, vivid, impressionable, unforgetting, and cast, as appeared, when it reached its maturity, in the true heroic mould. And though the seeds that then fell, unheeded, probably, by the sower, on Olympia's young intellect, do not appear to have produced immediate fruit of any kind, unless, indeed, we trace their consequences in a total absence of all respect for the orthodox superstitions, they were assuredly thrown on soil which received and treasured them.

The two scholars parted. Curione in Piedmont soon found that the hostility of his family, outraged by his heretical manifestations, was such as to make it necessary for him to seek safety in obscurity. And this he succeeded in finding as tutor to the children of a nobleman, who lived in the country, near Turin. Here, however, his zeal for the truth did not allow him long rest for the sole of his foot. For chancing once to be present while an itinerant Dominican was preaching in a neighbouring church, and hearing him falsify in the course of his sermon some extracts from the writings of some of the German reformers, he publicly interrupted him to correct his statement. Seizure, imprisonment in

the dungeons of the neighbouring city of Turin, with the prospect of a trial before the ecclesiastical authorities, which would be sure to end in a capital condemnation, were the results, as might have been anticipated, of this audacious testimony to the truth. Having, by almost miraculous good fortune, succeeded in escaping from his prison, he fled to Pavia, and there obtained a chair in the University.

The decree of the Senate of that city, conferring on him this employment, is dated 9th of October, 1538.* And that such a body should have made such an appointment, just after the candidate for it had escaped from imprisonment for heresy in a neighbouring city, is a curious instance of the utter severance in all respects of one community from another, which a few miles of intervening territory could in those days effect. It having been soon discovered, however, adds Tiraboschi, who the new professor was, he would have been arrested, if his pupils, already appreciating their teacher at his worth, had not formed themselves into a body-guard for him, which for three years ensured his safety despite the efforts of the ecclesiastical authorities to get possession of his person. And here we have another very remarkable indication of the strange looseness of the bonds which held society together at that period; and also, as it may be fairly argued, of the general reluctance of the Italians to accept these first manifestations of inquisitorial action, or to lend them, if it could possibly be avoided, the assistance of the secular arm. At length, however, urgent representations from Rome to the government of Milan compelled the University senate of Pavia to advise Curione to escape from their city, while it was yet possible to do so.

* Tiraboschi, tom. vii. p. 2286.

He was thus thrown once again upon the wide world. And it was then that his friend Morato, who had by that time been restored to his home and position at Ferrara, wrote to him to offer him an asylum under his own roof.

"Come to us;" writes the Ferrarese pedagogue to his fellow-labourer; "you will find your place at our hearth vacant. And especially there is a corner for you in my library, where you may indulge *ad libitum* in the united blessings of solitude, silence, peace, and oblivion."

It cannot be doubted, that the persecuted scholar quitted these good things occasionally to share in those meetings in the apartments of Duchess Renée, which were found to be so pernicious to the true religion. It was by her, that he was eventually sent with pressing recommendations to the republic of Lucca, which city was from the first one of the strongholds of the "novatori," as the Catholic historians love to style the Reformers. The Luchesi at once provided him with a professor's chair in their schools. But he had hardly been there a year when there came a demand that he should be given up into the hands of the Pope's officers. This the free republicans refused to do. But they judged it prudent to advise him to fly. And as it was now clear that there was neither safety nor rest for him in Italy, he determined on abandoning it; and escaping first to Lausanne, where he taught with credit and success for four years, was thence invited by the city of Bâle to accept the chair of literature in that University; where he remained leading a life of peaceful and useful literary labour till his death in 1569.* The numerous

* This brief account of the career of Curione has been taken from Bonnet's Vie d' Olympia, supplemented, where necessary, by Tiraboschi.

works left by him, which may be found catalogued by Schelhorn in his "Amœnities," are some of them on theological subjects, but chiefly treat of classical criticism and grammar.

Morato had returned to Ferrara. His wanderings were brought to an end by the permission to do so in 1539. His colleagues, friends, and pupils had never ceased to regret his absence. Calcagnini had written to him in his exile, assuring him that "every one confesses how great a loss the city has suffered by your departure," and that his scholars refused to attend the lectures of any other professor.* Whatever may have been the cause of his exile, it is evident that no prejudice against him existed at the court on his return. When he left Ferrara in 1533, Alphonso I. was still reigning. He died in 1534; and Morato on his return found Hercules II. and his wife Renée on the throne. And very shortly after this restoration to his home and his pupils he was appointed tutor to the late Duke's two sons, Alphonso and Alphonsino.†

Now, therefore, all was once again well with our professor. His old friends hastened to gather round him, and found in his modest home a new attraction, in addition to those which had previously rendered his society precious to them. Old Calcagnini found the "prattling infant muse" to whom he had sent a kiss in her exile, grown into a lovely girl, on the eve of blossoming into womanhood, with talents and acquirements sufficient to make the reputation of a mature scholar. In truth, the apparition among them of this bright-eyed and bright-minded creature, enthusiastic in her love for that literature which had been the object and business of their lives, animated with the very spirit of the poesy

* Tiraboschi, tom. vii. p. 1747. † Note 2.

of Greece and Rome, eloquent with the well-loved music of Homer's or Virgil's tones, which fell mended from her lips, talking their talk, interested in their discussions, and anxious to learn more of all, that it was so delightful a task to them to teach, seems nearly to have turned the learned heads of that knot of grey-beards, who frequented her father's house. They seem at a loss how to express their admiration in terms sufficiently glowing. Old Gregory Giraldi, writing amid the tortures of the gout, which kept him bed-ridden during the last ten years of his life, speaks of her as "a damsel talented beyond the nature of her sex, thoroughly skilled in Greek and Latin literature, and a miracle to all who hear her." Comparisons with Diotima, Aspasia, the Muses, Graces, and everything feminine that ever was wise, brilliant, or charming, were showered around her. If it be possible that the head of a youthful beauty should be turned by the flattery and admiration of grey-headed and gouty old gentlemen, expressed in the most Attic Greek, and purest Ciceronian Latin, that of Olympia could hardly have escaped.

This chorus of admiration must, at all events, have been gratifying to the proud father. The home-coming, after his long wanderings, must have been a happy one. His appointment at the court, too, must have been a satisfactory assurance that no suspicion of heterodoxy had as yet arisen to injure him. Yet mischief from this source had been busy in Ferrara during his absence, and that in the innermost chambers of the palace. The priest had, as usual, thrust himself between the husband and the wife; and the Duchess Renée had become, on theological grounds, an object of suspicion to her husband, whose political relations with the Holy See made it expedient that he and

his should enjoy a reputation of unblemished orthodoxy.

Renée had, years before, as we have seen, consorted with those who were *afterwards* found to have been enemies to the Church; and she must have been known to have held, ever since her first coming into Italy, doctrines which were *afterwards* pronounced heretical. But so did Contarini, who was sent by the Pope to Ratisbon in 1541 to hold conference, and, if possible, come to accord with the Protestants. Meantime nobody knew exactly how the Church might peremptorily require her sons to believe themselves justified. And Duke Hercules was by no means likely to have any special personal susceptibilities on such matters. So, as long as no offence was given to Rome, Renée might hold her "academies," gather her spiritual friends around her, and talk about faith and works, if she liked it.

But during Morato's absence events had happened which had changed all this. One M. Charles d'Espeville had arrived at Ferrara in 1536. The good Duchess, always eager to welcome, and assist if need were, her countrymen, accorded the most hospitable reception to this M. d'Espeville. He at once became one of her intimates, and was admitted to conferences either secret, or shared only with a select few.

Now if lay sovereigns have, as has been said, long arms, Mother Church has a piercing and most ubiquitous eye. Though Duke Hercules might not see what was passing under his nose, vigilant Mother Church saw it, as she sat far away in the middle of her spider's web there at Rome. And she hastened to hiss into the ear of Duke Hercules the horror, that there in his city of Ferrara, in the innermost chambers of his own palace,

in the closet of his wife, was crouched, hatching heresies and treasons, the arch-heretic, the very emissary of the Evil one, Calvin himself!*

These, it must be admitted, were tidings of a sort to irritate a ducal husband, troubled little about his "justification," but much about his investiture parchments; —most orthodoxly willing to be saved either by works or faith, or any other way Holy Church might deem best for him; but extremely anxious about his "tail male," and the securing of his temporalities against the strangely temporal appetites of that spiritual mother. For of all the long disputes between Duke Hercules and the Apostolic chamber, painfully prosecuted by envoys, memorials, writings innumerable, by even personal riding to Rome, and heart-wearying struggle with the obstructions, insincerities and chicaneries of that most intolerable of human entities, the gist was briefly this. My body, with its ducal cloak and trappings, its dignities, possessions, and hereditaments to be mine, and the same to pass to the heirs thereof lawfully begotten;—my soul, with all thereunto appertaining,—of course carrying with it *sans mot dire*, the souls of all my subjects,—to be yours in eternal fee simple, to fashion, manage, and dispose of as to you shall seem fit. A fair bargain surely this, proposed by Duke Hercules of Ferrara, by no means a singular or eccentric prince, if indeed souls were what Mother Church was specially eager after, as she said! And this agreement might have been quickly and easily made, to be loyally observed by either party, as agreements between honest folk are, had it not been that Holy Mother Church, fully minded to keep tight hold

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 329.

of the souls in question, would not give up the hope of laying her hand on the bodies also.

And now in the midst of all the uphill work of driving his negotiation to a favourable conclusion, as he hoped, while promising largely, and most sincerely, poor man! the complete cession of his own and subjects' souls, here was his own wife, not only saying her soul was her own, but disposing of it to Mother Church's most dreaded and detested enemy.

Swift remedy found the exasperated Duke for such domestic treason. And here Mnemosyne begs to suggest as a subject for artistic presentment the incident which followed. Scene—the private closet of the Duchess in the castle of Ferrara. The persons assembled there have been engaged in that sweet converse so delightful to persons bound together by common thoughts and feelings in the midst of an unsympathising and hostile world around them. There is the good Duchess, who has perhaps been mingling with more serious discourse questionings of things in that dear distant France, which she never ceased while absent from it to regret. The elderly lady, somewhat austerely dressed in black to the throat, with deep ruffle around her neck, and large hanging sleeves to her dress, is Madame de Soubise, who came with Renée from France, and who was, as is well known, "lame of the same foot," as the Catholic writers phrase it. The great heresiarch himself might have been recognised by those handsome but hard and severe features, the lofty but not noble forehead, and the bright but domineering eye; but he could not have been known from habiliments chosen to suit the character of M. Charles d' Espeville. The Signeurs de Pons and de Soubise may also have been present. But one other person

was assuredly there;—a writer of obscene French verses, as the orthodox Italians call him,* who had an absurd mania for meddling in theology, and fancying that he comprehended the original language of the sacred writers, one Clement Marot,—he was there too, and "assisted Calvin much in saturating the mind of the Duchess with pestilent doctrine."

"To them, enter" hurriedly and noisily the Duke in high wrath, and at his heels, opera-stage fashion, a sufficient impersonation of "la force publique."

A rapid glance of the angry eye indicates to those active officers the duty in hand. And M. Charles d' Espeville, alias John Calvin, and the luckless poet turned theologian, are marched off, with a very tolerable prospect of martyrdom before them. "And as for you, Madame! . . &c."

Calvin and Marot were marched off under escort to Bologna. But the terrible marital lecture, which it has been left to the competent reader's imagination to supply, did not so terrify Renée as to prevent her from promptly and secretly dispatching certain trustworthy emissaries, who, overtaking the escort on their road,† liberated the prisoners, and set them free to make the best of their way across the Alps.

This incident made a serious difference in the condition of the Duchess. Constant suspicion and severity seem to have henceforth made her life at Ferrara a very unhappy one. And the following lines‡ addressed by Clement Marot to Marguerite, the sister of Francis I., speak touchingly enough the forlorn misery of her life:—

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 329.

† Frizzi, *ibid.*

‡ For the original, see Note 3.

'Ah, Marguerite! list to the bitter smart,
That fills Renée of France her noble heart;
And sisterlike some better aid impart
Than hope alone.
Thou knowest how she left her native shore,
Leaving there friends and kin for evermore;
But what in that strange land she doth endure
Thou dost *not* know.
She sees not one, to whom she can complain;
Her bright eye seeks her distant land in vain;
And, as to quench all hope, the mountain chain
Parts her and you."

Renée was henceforward a person marked as "infected," and subjected to suspicion and severity accordingly; not because she held certain opinions, which, as has been before insisted on, were not yet condemned; but because she had been discovered to be the disciple and friend of Calvin. He at all events was condemned clearly enough; and to consort with him was overt heresy. And this happened in 1536. It is impossible to suppose, therefore, that Morato could have continued in the good graces of the court, had he been known to harbour beneath his roof a fugitive from the ecclesiastical authorities, as Celio Curione was in 1541, which must have been the epoch of his visit to Ferrara. Nor could the Duchess have ventured, unless in strict secrecy, to have received him, and sent him with her recommendations to Lucca.

The palace of Ferrara was thus at this time essentially divided against itself. The Duke and the Duchess were pulling with might and main in diametrically opposite directions; he by open exercise of authority, every now and then irritated into violence: she by dissimulation and secret intelligences.

And this was the state of that household, not pleasing in any home however royal, when our Olympia was called to become a member of it.

CHAPTER III.

How shall a Pope be saved? with the answer thereto.—How shall our Olympia be saved? To be taken into consideration in a subsequent chapter.

THE eldest child of Hercules and Renée was a daughter, Anna, born in 1531. Alphonso, the heir apparent, who succeeded to the Duchy in 1559, was born in 1533. Then came another daughter, Lucrezia, born in 1535, a third named Eleonora in 1537, and lastly a second son, called Luigi in 1538. Thus Anna, the eldest, was eight years old at the time of Morato's return to Ferrara; and her education, according to the newest fashion then in vogue, was the chief pre-occupation of the Duchess. The new learning was the fashionable mania of the day in ladies' bower, as in the halls of universities. A delicate taste for the charm of a Ciceronian style was as much necessary to the finished education of a noble lady then, as the graceful carriage of the person in crossing a room or entering a carriage is now. Male blockheadism had not yet suggested to the prudent jealousy of the lords of the creation the discovery, that learning tended to unfit women for the more special duties of wives and mothers. Not to be classical was to be nothing. So Anna d' Este was above all else to be a perfect Latinist and Grecian.

It was in 1540, when she was only nine years old (!)

that Calcagnini thus wrote to her, of course in Latin, only to be known from that of the purest Augustan mintage by its greater difficulty and a certain affected intricacy of construction, observable in most of the Latinists of that period:—

"I have read the fables you have translated from the Tuscan into Latin, in an elegant and ornate style, as becomes a royal hand. On finishing the perusal I had only to regret, that it was so soon ended, and that my curiosity was left unsatisfied. I trust that these essays may be the seed of future compositions, which, when matured, will reflect honour on your name. I have already the pleasure of applauding these first steps on the path to fame."

What the very young lady's own composition may have been we have no means of judging; but it must be presumed that she was at all events competent to read readily the letter in which these compliments are addressed to her; and we should now-a-days consider that much for a young lady of nine years, or young gentleman either.

Other translations sent, as it seems, to Celio Curione in the following year, are acknowledged by him in still more flattering and flowery language. And the circumstance is remarkable on other grounds than as a testimony to the Princess Anna's classical proficiency. Curione was at that time, as has been seen, a refugee from ecclesiastical persecution, finding shelter and concealment in the house of Morato. Is it to be supposed that Duke Hercules would have tolerated his daughter's correspondence with one so situated, and that, too, after the unfortunate Calvin discovery? It seems to be but too clear, that Miss Anna and her mamma must have come to the under-

standing that papa was to know nothing about these literary intimacies with gentlemen under a cloud.

We may be tolerably certain too, that had the Duke known all that his wife knew of Messer Peregrino Morato, he would not have permitted another step, which that lady took about the time of which we are speaking, very soon after the return of Morato,—that is, and in all probability not later than 1540. This was the invitation of Olympia to court, to be the companion of her daughter, and sharer in her studies. Renée well knew the power of emulation; and in her eagerness to stimulate the efforts of her daughter, she determined to place beside her one, just five years older than herself, of whose wonderful talents and acquirements all Ferrara was talking.

So in, or very near about, 1540, Olympia left her father's humble home and went to be an inmate of the court, in the dissenting interest, or female side of the house. For dissension and dispute were ever more and more openly manifesting themselves in that splendid dwelling. The Duke and his councillors, lay and ecclesiastical, were becoming from day to day more jealously and suspiciously orthodox; as tidings from all parts of Italy showed that the Church was becoming alive to the dangers which threatened it from the new ideas, and, having once realised this fact, was suddenly convinced of their heretical nature, and determined to exert its utmost power to extinguish them by violence.

Paul III., a politic and worldly wise old man, with considerable desire to do such parts of a Pope's duty as could be accomplished without interfering with his own projects and schemes of ambition, was quite as much minded as any member of the sacred college to

preserve intact to Rome its bishops and high priests, the monopoly of those sacerdotal emoluments and perquisites, which sacramental Christianity was contrived to afford in abundance. Pius IX., a better man, as living in better times than Paul III., found himself in front of the same eternal difficulty. All hope and project of reform had to be abandoned before the too-evident incompatibility of the fundamental sine-quâ-non condition, that "I transmit to my successors intact the power I have received from my predecessors." Thorough reform on the condition, that nothing shall be changed! Poor Pius! So once again Holy Church had to return to its vomit of St. Angelo and Paliano prisons, arbitrary arrests, immaculate conceptions, winking virgins, and concordats. And mankind finding finally, all hope of curing the cancer vain, has to screw its courage to the truly painful and terrible operation of excision;—as mankind silently and with naturally reluctant procrastination, is even now doing.

Paul III. was as free from persecuting instincts as Pius IX. He had been a man of the world, was the father of children, and had a natural human heart within his bosom. But at his elbow stood one, who was all priest. No merciful weakness, no natural affection, no human sympathy, no shade of misgiving, ever checked John Peter Caraffa in his crusade against free human thought. When Paul was doubtfully deliberating what measures might best be adopted to check the progress of heresy in Italy, Caraffa promptly decided for him, that the Inquisition was the one thing wanted,—the Inquisition with fullest powers of imprisonment, confiscation, and death, and he himself as Chief Inquisitor,—this, by God's help, and that of

fire and sword, and nothing else than this, would succeed in victoriously crushing and extirpating hydra-headed heresy. On the 21st of July, 1542, the requisite bull was obtained from Paul III., and Caraffa rushed to his work, with the avidity of an unleashed hound on his prey.

Such signs of the times were not lost upon Duke Hercules, and reproduced themselves in sundry painful forms in the interior of the palace. The Duchess is still found to have about her persons "of very unwholesome smell;"* the flock of them have to be overhauled by the Duke's new Jesuit director, Pelletario, and all those found "with the rot upon them" are got rid of. A powerful stream of pure doctrine was turned on upon the infected Duchess, and sacraments were prescribed without much success. The "miserable woman" is found with flesh-meat on her table on a Friday; and the justly exasperated Duke, at his wits' end, has to shut her up in her apartment, with two attendants only, and send her daughters to a convent. "Now, though Renée was very astute," writes the historian, "far more so than the Duke and all his counsellors, yet it is not permissible to attribute wholly to her cunning the surprising conversion that was operated in her, immediately after she was shut up."† The imprisoned lady, under plainly miraculous influence, sent suddenly for her husband's priest, made a full confession, placed her conscience entirely in his keeping, and asked for the sacrament from his hands. So efficacious a spiritual agent is a little persecution, that astute as the patient was, and temporary as the conversion was proved in the sequel,

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 360. † *Ibid*

the historian cannot believe but that some genuine spiritual effect was produced by it.

It at all events had the effect of releasing Renée from her durance, and restoring her daughters to her. For the Duke, delighted at the success of his discipline, "admitted her to sup with him that same evening."

But amid all this, in a family so constituted, and living under such conditions, young Olympia must have been placed at times in strange positions, have witnessed some suggestive scenes, and altogether have had offered to her ripening intelligence matter for meditation on many things. As to the disputed points, and antagonistic principles and prejudices, which lay at the root of all these jars and difficulties, she seems to have been at that time effectually preserved against all the dangers of partizanship by thorough indifference to the whole subject. The arrangement by which she had become a resident at the court was to her a subject of unmixed rejoicing and exultation. The household duties which the narrow circumstances of her father's home had imposed upon her, had occasioned many a sigh over the hours thus lost to her beloved studies. Now her whole life was to be devoted under the most favourable circumstances to the prosecution of them. "Henceforward," writes Calcagnini in a letter to her, "you may give yourself up to your favourite pursuits, change the distaff for the pen, house linen for books, and the exercise of the fingers for that of the mind. . . . . It will now be for you to preserve without flaw the good gifts which you have received from your parents—modesty, candour, and virtuous principles, and to add to them wisdom,

elegance, high-mindedness, and contempt for all that is base."*

She was, moreover, still to be under the tuition of her father in the palace, and was to share with the Princess Anne the Greek lessons of Sinapi.

Several specimens have been preserved of her compositions about this time, which indicate a very remarkable amount of acquirement. Various passages have have been quoted by her biographers with perhaps more of admiration than they merit. They were received by her contemporaries with the most unbounded and hyperbolical applause; and the modern narrators of her career seem to have taken the tone of the highflown eulogies of these productions which they have found on record. But in reading things of this kind, of Cisalpine production, much allowance must always be made for the prevalent habit of undiscriminating and exaggerated laudation, arising from the ever-present influence of municipal rivalry. The "nul aura de l'esprit, hors nous et nos amis," principle was always at work. To a Ferrara man, Olympia was *our* Olympia,—"gloria Ferrarae; patriæ decus," &c., and was to be made the most of accordingly. But, secondly, still more allowance must be made for the strong tendency of the literary culture of that period in Italy to regard the form rather than the matter. Artistic love for the beauties of language leads the literary world of Italy, even at the present day, to attach an undue measure of importance to diction and style, at the expense of subject-matter. And at the flood-tide of the classical mania of the sixteenth century, correctness of classic phraseology, and perfection

* Calc. Opera., cited by Bonnet.

of mimicry of the ancients, was the alpha and omega of excellence.

And in these respects the writings of Olympia are truly remarkable. The amount of acquaintance with the classics then most in vogue, the familiarity with their modes of thinking, and the mastery of their language, attained by a girl of from fourteen to sixteen, are really astonishing. Thus we have an essay on Mutius Scævola in Greek; a defence of Cicero against some of his detractors; and, more remarkable still, lectures (!) on the paradoxes of that author.

Of the whole picture, such as we are able to realise it, of this bright and beautiful Olympia, ambitious of praise, triumphant, full of fervid poetic enthusiasm, and love of the beautiful, enchanting all eyes, and charming all ears,—approaching, one may fancy, in social position, some Siddons or Mars more nearly than any other existence known to our times; of the whole picture, these public lectures, or declamations, seem to our notions the strangest feature. Let the inmates of our "Establishments," "Colleges," "Academies,' of the most finished and "finishing" category, picture to themselves a young lady of sixteen called on to lecture before an audience, composed of all the court circle, and most learned Dons of Ferrara, on the Paradoxes of Cicero!—improvising her declamation, too, in Latin and Greek, if we may believe her friend Curio, writing many years afterwards, with the enthusiastic admiration of these exhibitions still strong within him.

"Then," writes he, "we used to hear her declaiming in Latin, improvising in Greek, explaining the paradoxes of the greatest orators, and answering to all the questions addressed to her." *

* Celio Curione, Epist., cited by Bonnet.

It is evident that these public performances were considered among the most important and valuable parts of a complete education, from the instructions still extant, which Morato gave in writing to his daughter, about the time when she left his roof to reside under that of Duchess Renée.

Here are some of the admonitions which a fond and anxious father deemed most important to be impressed on a daughter about to leave her paternal roof for the first time.

"A matron, before leaving her bower, consults her mirror and her favourite maid to know with what look and air she is about to appear in society. The human voice ought to act in like manner. A speaker should use his lips as bridles to his words, raising or lowering his tones, and giving them delicacy or sonority as he opens his lips more or less.

"Virgil, Cæsar, Brutus, Cicero, excelled in the art of elocution. Minerva, Mercury, the Muses, the harmony of the spheres, the chords of the lyre, Apollo, the king of song, echo, which repeats our voices,—are not all these images of the multiplicity of tone of which the human voice is capable? What man does not listen with pleasure to accents pure and harmonious? The guardian of the infernal gate, Cerberus himself, is appeased by them. The wheel of Ixion at the sound of a sweet voice stands still!"

Humph! It does not quite please one!—rings mighty hollow, at least on the Teutonic ear, all this about Minerva, Mercury, Apollo, king of song, and the wheel of Ixion! Was that worthy old sixteenth-century schoolmaster really and truly scooped and hollowed out by perpetual droppings from Helicon into an empty shell resounding classicalities, and mere

togaed simulacrum of a Roman of the Augustan age? To the Teutonic imagination, the picture thus far realised of our Olympia, seems to present an altogether scenic personage, prepared for purposes of representation, slender, graceful figure, draped in long white muslin robes, with beautifully eloquent upraised arm, "Andres athenaioi" on her lovely lips, and background of gleaming marble porticoes, and grey-green olive groves behind,—the cloudless blue above, and bluer Egean in the distance! A truly charming picture! And yet this nineteenth century of ours would be sorely puzzled to what good use to put the original, if we had her among us, for any other than mere academic drawing-school purposes.

Not a principal "in any establishment," of howsoever slight "finishing" pretensions, but would at once, on most cursory examination, pronounce our poor Olympia an entire failure as a specimen of female education, a mistake from beginning to end, good only as an example of what should be avoided.

Several of the lectures, or declamations, pronounced by her before the learned world of Ferrara, have been preserved. Here is a specimen of the introductory portion of one of them.*

"I well know the rarely equalled benevolence of my audience; yet the timidity natural to my age, joined to the feebleness of my talents, fills me with reasonable alarm. I tremble, and remain voiceless, like the rhetorician who steps up to the altar at Lyons †—

"'Ceu Lugdunensem rhetor dicturus ad aram.'

"However, you command, and I will obey; for no

* Cited by M. Bonnet.

† A citation from Juvenal, alluding to certain rhetorical jousting-bouts established by Caligula at Lyons.

sacrifice is more agreeable to God than that of a willing obedience. I submit myself, therefore, to this trial for the third time, like an artist unskilled in his art, who can make nothing of a coarse-grained marble. But if you offer a block of Parian to his chisel, he will no longer deem his work valueless. The beauty of the material will give value to his production. Perhaps it will be so with mine. There are strains so rich in melody and harmony, that even when reproduced by the most miserable instrument, they yet retain all their charm. Such are the words of my favourite author. Listen to them. They will lose nothing of their grace and majesty even in passing from my lips."

Those who were present at those performances thought that the words gained much, on the contrary, in passing from those lips. Nothing seems to have excited the admiration and approbation of her contemporaries more than these public declamations. "One might have fancied that one was listening to one of the learned virgins of Greece or Rome, to whom, indeed, she may be justly compared!" * cries one enthusiastic hearer.

"The young girls of thy age," writes another, "pluck spring flowers from the meadows to weave them into many-coloured chaplets. But thou gatherest no flowerets doomed ere long to fade and die, but selectest the immortal amaranths from the abounding gardens of the Muses, whose altogether divine privilege it is never more to wither, but gain beauty from time, and flourish ever more greenly as it passes." †

Poor old Giraldi sends her Latin verses from his gout-tormented bed.

* Curionis, Epist. † Calcag. Opera.

"Thou 'rt all fair and brightly glowest,
As in years and lore thou growest,
In the Virtue's court, young maid,
Which Renée's fair virgins tread,
And the sister Muses nine.
Happy he, whom speech of thine
Warms and gladdens! happier yet
Parents that did thee beget,
And named Olympia! happiest he—
Should fate to man such bliss decree—
Whose bride thou shalt consent to be.
And e'en I, though old 'tis true,
Have my share of pleasure too,
While to soothe my gouty pains
Such a damsel's smile remains." *

To all this homage was added the affectionate kindness and liking of the Duchess, Olympia's sovereign and mistress. She had, apparently after she had been at the court about a couple of years, an illness which made it desirable for her to return to her father's house, though it was with difficulty, we are told,† that Renée could make up her mind to part with her. Her absence was not long, and the following letter from the Greek professor, John Sinapi (he too, be it observed, in passing, "of very unwholesome smell;" so vain were poor Duke Hercules' efforts to keep a purely orthodox household), indicates the high place occupied by Olympia in the favour of the court.

"All here are greatly delighted to know that you are re-established and out of the doctor's hands. Settle at once with your father the day and the manner of your return among us. The Princess has declared that it will be a great pleasure to her to see you again, be it brought about how it may. She places at your disposition the litter in which you were carried to your

* See Note 4. † Bonnet, p. 37.

father's house. Only arrange with your father your return, in whatever manner you may find most agreeable and speediest,"

With her companion and fellow-student, the Princess Anne, she lived on terms of the most affectionate intimacy. A durable friendship grew up between them; and a letter written many years afterwards by Olympia to her old playmate, gives a pleasing idea of the sort of companionship which existed between the two young girls.

"You remember," she writes, "how familiarly we lived together, notwithstanding you were my sovereign and liege lady, and for how many years the companionship lasted; how all our studies were in common, and how the pursuit of them continually increased the affection which had grown up between us."

Surely here was enough to "spoil" any young lady in her teens, if homage, flattery, applause, admiration, excited and gratified vanity, had spoiling power!

And Olympia stepped upon the pedestal set for her with all the youthful audacity of conscious genius. They all told her, that she was a tenth muse, and she accepted the part with exulting confidence, that it was in truth that for which kind nature had best fitted her. Hear her own joyous profession of faith, as standing there in the pride and grace of her beauty before a courtly, gay, and learned circle, she mouthed it forth in sonorous Greek verse, harmoniously flowing with the pure young voice amid a burst of enthusiastic applause, the echoes of which have sounded across three hundred years.

Done into homely English the rhymes fall sadly flat. But the meaning may correctly be gathered as thus:*

* Note 5.

"No joy is still a joy to all mankind,
For Jove hath given to each a different mind
Castor and Pollux by a different aim,
Though twin-born brothers, seek the path to fame.
And I, though woman, womanly gear have left,
Distaff and threads, and work-basket and weft!
The Muses' haunts, Parnassus' flowery hill,
These have been all my joy, these shall be still.
For other pleasures other maids have sighed,
These are my glory, these my joy and pride."

The hexameters and pentameters are quite as good, and no better, than our English schools, after sufficient years spent in minutely copying from the model, can supply, if need were, in any quantity to order.

Poor Olympia! The highly competent principle of that finishing establishment, to whose experienced judgment we have already had occasion to refer, would arch her awful brows more highly than ever over her gold double eye-glasses, it is to be feared, at these shockingly unfeminine sentiments. "τὰ θηλυκὰ λεῖπον," "taken leave of your feminalities"! Miss Morata! If I am rightly informed of your meaning, unhappily it would indeed seem so! A very unfortunately situated young woman! Altogether devoid too of religious principle, as I am told; and as indeed might have been guessed without telling!

Not improbably there may have been ladies too in Ferrara who commented on the young muse much to the same purpose. But Olympia trod her bright path exultingly, scattering poesies and gathering triumphs, serenely indifferent to the justification quarrels, and free-will perplexities which were distracting the world around her, serenely worshipping beauty amid her muse-haunted attic shades in undeniably heathenish and pagan fashion.

Poor Olympia! "Malignant fate sate by and

smiled." But some better ruler of the destinies than any malignant fate smiled also. The "Theluka" were after all not left very far behind. They will all be forthcoming in due time, these saucily abused feminalities, at the quickening trumpet-blast of the fairy knight appointed to the adventure of breathing the soul of womanhood into our Undine-like muse.

CHAPTER IV.

"The whirligig of time brings in his revenges."—Still Undine.—The "salvation" question stands over.

In the winter of 1542-3 Charles V. was in Italy, returning from his unsuccessful expedition against Algiers. As usual, the sovereigns of Italy were all on the alert to do homage to their great "barbarian" master; buzzing about him, to beg "investitures,"—to plead for pardon in respect of deeds done in contempt of their allegiance as soon as his back was turned,—to complain one against the other, and in general to kotoo the great man, and express by all means their own flunkyhood.

Even octogenarian Paul III. thought it necessary to travel in mid-winter to meet the Emperor in the neighbourhood of Bologna. Paul was anxious about the great council now at last in earnest on the point of being summoned; was very desirous of sounding the Emperor's mind, and getting, if possible, at his real views upon the subject; and thought, perhaps, that some good might be done by having an opportunity of ear-wigging him respecting sundry matters connected with it.

Charles had promised to meet him at Busseto; and the old Pope had travelled as far as Parma towards the place of meeting. But the Emperor kept him waiting there in vain, remaining himself the while in Genoa.

Very near the spot, where the octogenarian Pope was, in the depth of winter, awaiting the pleasure of the Emperor, there had taken place, some five hundred years before, another meeting between an Emperor and a Pope, of which the circumstances had been somewhat different. And it may be supposed that the vicinity of that world-famous Canossa castle can hardly have failed to suggest some very disagreeable comparisons to the mind of the pontiff. Then it had been the Emperor, who had waited the good pleasure of the priest, standing there for three days' space bareheaded among the snow. Those were the good old days, eh, your Holiness! But then, that grand old Hildebrand, you see, really did think and believe, without any manner of doubt, that he absolutely *was* God's vicar on earth;—in some sense, indeed, truly was so. And that makes all the difference in the matter. Whereas your Holiness, in this sixteenth century, you know, between ourselves . . . . must put the best face you can upon the matter, swallow your indignation as best you may, and turn your face homewards.

Pope Paul did so; and determined on returning to Bologna by way of Ferrara, very much to the annoyance of Duke Hercules.* It was not that there was not plenty of business to be transacted between the Pope and the Duke. But the successor of St. Peter travelled in a manner that made the honour of being his host a very serious consideration. Duke Hercules was much given to splendid hospitality, was fond, generally, of magnificence, and of occasions for display. But he had already borne the entire expense of the Pope's passage through Modena on his way northwards, and was not anxious to do the honours of his capital to

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 347.

such a visitor on such a scale as he felt he must do them, if they were to be done at all.

In the first place "Servus servorum" travelled with a suite of three thousand persons, among whom were eighteen cardinals, forty bishops, and a whole posse of ambassadors and princes. He brought with him fourteen hundred horses, which seem few enough to drag and carry all these ecclesiastical dignitaries and their followers over the roads of Italy as they then were. Then festivals, gala doings temporal and spiritual, spectacles and celebrations of all sorts must be provided, and cash disbursed on all sides. A magnificent state barge,—a bucentaur, as the chroniclers call it, such as that in which the Venetian doge went out to wed the Adriatic—was sent up the Po to the nearest point to Parma, together with a whole fleet of other boats to bring the Pope and his enormous following down the river.

The famous villa of Belvidere was to be the Pope's resting place the first night after entering the Duke's territories. This was a pleasure-palace of the Dukes of Ferrara, built on an island in the Po, which was entirely occupied by it and the superb gardens attached to it. The recorders of the Ferrarese magnificences are never tired of describing the splendours of Belvidere, its marble quays and stairs from the water's edge, its courts, its fountains (which necessarily, as Frizzi remarks, must have been worked by machinery), its walls, glowing with the frescoes of the best masters of the Ferrara school, and, above all, its enchanting—if not, as Tasso describes them, enchanted—gardens. For these ducal pleasure-grounds furnished, it is said, the model whence the poet drew his well-known description of the gardens of Armida.

The next day there is the usual ceremony of the state entry into the city. The cannon fire, and the bells ring; the crown prince Alphonso, with an hundred youths, chiefly of the students of the University, bring the keys of the city in a golden basin to the feet of his Holiness, who kisses the prince on the forehead. Then he has to hear an oration, then to be carried in a chair on men's shoulders all round the city, blessing all the way, till his arm is ready to drop off, then to "attend service" at the Cathedral—(adorned for the occasion by four pieces of arras belonging to the Duke, valued at sixty thousand crowns, some three hundred thousand pounds sterling, at least, of our present money!)—then to hear more orations; and then, it is to be hoped, to be put to bed. For in truth, for an octogenarian Servus servorum, such a day's work must have been harder than that of most of his masters.

The next day the Duchess has to do her share of the hard work, and with seventy-two ladies all on horseback, and all dressed in black and gold, and twenty-two cars full of other ladies following them, "made several circuits of the city."

But the grand day was the third, which happened to be the festival of St. George, the patron saint of Ferrara. The Pope had to do pontifical mass in the cathedral to begin with. After dinner, he was present at a tournament held in his honour. And after supper the "Adelphi" of Terence was performed before him and all the great folks assembled, by the sons and daughters of the Duke, and doubtless also by our Olympia.

Muratori, in his "Antiquities of the House of Este," rehearses the different parts sustained by the three princesses and their two brothers, but says nothing of the share Olympia had in the fête. But this, of course,

is quite in accordance with the natural instincts of a court historian. It is likely enough, however, that the poor schoolmaster's daughter, who would most assuredly have eclipsed her fellow comedians, was not permitted to have the opportunity of committing such a solecism. But it is impossible that such a business could have been afoot in the court of Ferrara, and that Olympia should not have had a leading share in the guidance of it, behind if not before the curtain.

As a detached bit of sixteenth century life, brought up out of the dark past, and made to flit for a moment before our vision by history's magic lanthorn, it is a pretty and striking scene enough, and interestingly characteristic of tastes and manners,—this venerable (looking) octogenarian pontiff, with his eighteen cardinals and forty bishops, &c., sitting there to hear a group of royal children, of whom the youngest was only five years old, declaim the rough comedy of ancient Rome! Little Luigi, sustained the part of a slave, Muratori tells us; and had not, we must suppose, much to say.

Amid all these festivities and amusements the Pope and the Duke had to find time for long colloquies, the subjects of which, we are told, were kept secret, but which may be easily divined.

The old investiture difficulty was not settled yet; and the new inquisition had to be established in Ferrara. Here, then, the proposed body and soul arrangement, might, one would think, have been brought to a settlement. But, as usual, the Duke assented to the proposed new and more complete abandonment of his own and his subjects' right to their own souls, but by no means obtained the temporal advantages he was so desirous of in return.

There were other matters, too, of very really im-

portant, but altogether material interest, to be debated between the Duke and the father of the faithful. All the rich cities, with their fertile territories, which are situated in the lower part of the great valley of the Po, have suffered from the earliest historic times, and to the present day still suffer from very great difficulty in getting rid of the waters brought down to them from the higher country by the Po itself, and sundry other rivers. As usual in the compensatory processes of nature, the same causes have produced their prosperity, and the circumstances which tend to diminish it. The whole of the wonderfully fertile region in question is alluvial soil of extremely recent formation. Very numerous and exceedingly curious discoveries, made at different times within the last two centuries at various points, extending over the whole district from Modena to the Adriatic, prove that the country has been at former times inhabited, when the surface of the soil was from four to ten or more feet lower than it is at the present day. On the left bank of the Brenta, near Fusina, a mosaic pavement, and other Roman remains, were found *in situ* at a level now two feet and a half below that of the mean height of the Adriatic. And a great variety of similar facts have been placed on record,* which satisfactorily prove that the level of the sea has been raised, *pari passu*, with that of the adjoining low lands.

The result of the process thus always going on is, that an exceedingly small margin of difference between the level of the land and that of the sea remains to render possible the discharge of the waters from the mouths of the different rivers. The fertilising materials, which are brought down from the Apennines in

* Frizzi, vol. i. p. 147.

vast quantities, not only tend to raise the general level of the district, but also, and with much greater rapidity, to raise the beds of the rivers, and obstruct their course. From a very early period, this evil has been met by the inhabitants by constructing lofty banks along the courses of their rivers. The more the bed of the stream became raised in the process of time, the higher these moles had to be built to follow it, till some of the rivers now traverse large districts of country in a perfectly artificial canal, constructed upon, instead of in, the face of the soil. Near Ferrara itself, the surface of the Po is now higher, it is said, than the highest building in the city.

In such a state of things, it may easily be imagined how important a public concern was, and still is, the maintenance and regulation of these vast artificial banks, and how vital a question the management of the waters of those secondary streams, which contribute their volume to the mass that threatens the lower country.

Then, again, the disputes inevitably arising from the conflicting interests of adjacent districts, in this respect, were further complicated by differences of an exactly opposite kind. For the waters, which, under certain conditions, were agents of destruction, which all were eager to escape at the expense of their neighbours, were, under other circumstances, creators of fertility and wealth, which all sought to appropriate to their own advantage.

Thus the Reno, which comes from the Apennines above Bologna, and is one of the most important of the tributaries of the Lower Po, had been modified in its couse by embankments, which tended to divert its waters from the extensive rice grounds of Bologna and Imola, and bring them into the Ferrarese branch

of the Po, which the people of that city at that time feared would, from the encumberment of its bed, soon become unnavigable.*

Here then was matter for interminable dispute and negotiation between the two governments,—disputes, too, which, in the hands of their more immediately interested subjects, gave rise to perpetual acts of lawless violence, to quarrels, and, on more than one occasion, even to pitched battles between commune and commune. For in the season of the floods, when the ruin of a whole district from anticipated inundation might be prevented by the cutting of an embankment, and thus averting the devastation from one's own to one's neighbour's fields; or when, in the summer, the fertilising stream, precious as a Pactolus, was insufficient for all the demands upon it, it could hardly be expected that such acts should not be resorted to, especially when, from the undecided condition of all the questions concerning the law of the case, either party honestly believed themselves to be in the right.

Thus, thrice in the course of the year 1542, the embankments of the Reno had been cut through in the night-time,† and it was whispered that the Duke himself was the instigator of the deed,—an opinion, which was strengthened by the evident unwillingness of the authorities to discover and punish the offenders.

But in this matter of the waters, as in the other affair, the Duke had to concede all and obtain nothing. The Pope deferred his decision till his return to Rome, and then gave sentence in his own favour, by awarding to the Bolognese all the advantages in dispute.

Olympia continued to be an inmate of the palace for about five years after the memorable visit of Pope

* Note 6. † Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 342.

Paul to Ferrara: five more happy sunshine years of Undine-Muse existence. The public declamations, the triumphs, the homage of the learned,* the interchange of complimentary poetry, the heathen philosophisings on Scipio's dream, and such like matters, went on as before. A more brilliant creature than this beautiful young priestess in the Temple of Minerva, or a sunnier existence, it is impossible to conceive. But had her life reached its term before the end of this summer-tide period, she would not have left behind her the fair claim to be remembered as one of the noblest types on record of true womanly excellence, which she afterwards made good. The depths of her moral nature slept like an unstirred lake, while the intellectual portion of her being was in full and energetic activity. And the subsequent completion of a noble character by the awakening of her soul at that fire-touch, which is woman's true Prometheus spark, shows us a psychological study of great beauty and interest.

But a very note-worthy indication of the *genuineness* of her nature, of the sincere simplicity of her enthusiasm and Muse-ship, and the sympathetic loveableness of her character, is to be found in the fact, that in the midst of her triumphant career, while she was the cynosure of all male eyes, and the object of so much male admiration, she formed the most durable and loving friendships with all that was best and noblest in the female world around her.

The attachment which existed between her and the companion of her studies, Anne d'Este, has been mentioned. It must have been at an early period of

* The historian of Ferrara, Gaspar Sardi, dedicated to her, towards the end of the period spoken of, his book "De Triplici Philosophiâ."

her residence at the court, that she and one of the ladies of the Duchess, Francesca Bucyronia, were drawn together rather by a similarity of qualities of heart than of intellectual pursuits. The learned German, John Sinapi, Olympia's Greek master, and second father, as she considered him, had also discovered the good qualities of Francesca, and induced her to leave the sunny skies of her own Italy and accompany him to Germany as his wife. The friendship which had been formed between the two young women in the bright spring-tide of their existence was life-long, and became strengthened in their after life under less brilliant skies, and in less brilliant fortunes.

Another friendship, of perhaps a yet closer and more intimate kind, was that which sprung up between Olympia and the Princess Lavinia della Rovere. This daughter of the Ducal family of Urbino had recently married Paolo Orsini, when, at the court of Ferrara, she became acquainted with Olympia. Lavinia, says the historian of her husband's family,* "was a lady of most excellent and cultivated mind, inasmuch as, besides her other rare and excellent qualities, she was devoted to philosophy and the other branches of profane literature;" "alla filosofia, e all' altre belle-lettere humane." This, too, was a friendship for life; and, despite the wide difference in the social standing and circumstances of the two friends, was one, in which the most perfect equality of affection placed these two natures—highly gifted both—in the relative position to each other, which their respective calibre of intellect made the fitting and natural one, of guide and guided, as is seen from the letters of Olympia in after life.

* Sansovino, Hist. de Casa Orsini, cited by Bonnet.

The remarkable limitation in Sansovino's above quoted eulogy to excellence in philosophy and *profane* literature, would seem to imply that Lavinia, at the time of which the writer is speaking, had paid no attention to the theological questions which were agitating the world. It may be, that the orthodox historian of the house of Orsini merely intended to indicate in a manner reflecting as little scandal as might be on the family of his patron, that in the province of religion there was little good to be said of the lady Lavinia. Either meaning on the part of a good Catholic would have done her little wrong at the time of her companionship with Olympia at the court of Ferrara.

The general movement of mind, and the ventilation of theological questions which was stirring society from the monk's cell to the lady's bower, had produced on both the friends a destructive, but as yet no constructive result. They had ceased to believe the incredibilities taught by the Church; and their emancipation had brought them to a state,—if not of entirely comfortable and contented indifferentism, yet to one of unanxious infidelity, in which their meditations were rather curious speculations, than struggles for vital truth.

This state of mind is clearly indicated by passages of Olympia's letters of an after period, joined to the traces yet left of her pre-occupations and studies at that time. Writing after her own mind had attained firm convictions, she exhorts her friend to "lay aside that old error, which formerly induced us to think that, before calling on God, it was necessary to know whether we had been from eternity elected by him. Rather let us, as he commands us, first implore his mercy, and then, when we have done so, we shall

know of a certainty, that we are of the number of elect."

It is needless now-a-days to stop to point out how this method of defending the tenets of Calvinism consists in simply abandoning them. The use of the passage quoted is only to show, that when the two friends had talked of these things together at Ferrara, they had been prevented from adopting the reformer's faith by these perplexities.

And this difficulty of finding the way to any firm standing ground of conviction was not a cause of unhappiness or struggle to these pure young hearts. Witness Olympia's subsequent opinion of her then state of mind.

"Had I remained longer at court," she writes* to her earliest friend Celio Curione, "it would have been all over with me and my salvation. For never while I remained there, could I attain the knowledge of aught lofty or divine, or read the books of either Testament."

The two young women talked of these subjects, soon discovered that they sympathised in utter alienation from the faith of the Church, compared their difficulties as to the new doctrines in vogue, and turned to the more congenial subjects of pagan philosophy and Augustan literature;—Olympia, for example, to the amusement of translating into the language of Cicero a couple of the fables of Boccaccio.

They are the first and second of the entire Decameron; a circumstance which looks as if it had been the translator's intention to proceed with the work. But they are such as to make the selection of them, if

* Olymp. Mor. C. S. Curioni, cited by Bonnet.

they were selected, sufficiently indicative of the tone of thinking and speaking of Church matters in those secret inner women's chambers of the Ferrara palace, which the Duke found it so impossible to purify from the heretical smell.

In the first place it may be observed, that the two "Novelle" in question are free from the indecency which marks so many of the collection. But they are among those which hit hardest the ecclesiastical shortcomings and absurdities of the age. In the first Ser Ciappelletto, who is described as one of the most worthless scoundrels who ever lived, sends for a friar when on his death-bed, and makes such a confession of all sorts of virtues, under the guise of remorseful dissatisfaction at the imperfection of them, that the confessor has him buried in a costly tomb at the expense of his convent, where his body forthwith begins to work miracles in the most satisfactory manner. The author, as if afraid of the telling force of his own satire, and the conclusions to which it naturally points, finishes by remarking, that after all it is impossible to deny that Ser Ciappelletto may have become San Ciappelletto in the other world by force of a sincere, even though momentary repentance in the last instants of his life!

The second story tells how a rich Jew was induced by a Christian friend to go to Rome for the purpose of examining Christianity at its fountain head, with a view to conversion in case conviction of the truth should reach his mind. The Jew notes well all that he can see and hear in the capital of Christianity, returns, and is baptised at once, alleging that nothing but divine miraculous interposition could possibly enable a religion preached and maintained by such men and

such means to subsist and find credence among mankind.

We can easily imagine, that such fun as this would be well relished with all the zest of forbidden fruit in the young Muse's classical version by the initiated set of erudite freethinkers, male and female, that made the circle of the Duchess of Renée. But Boccaccio is not the author, to whom Calvin, or even Celio Curione would have recommended one struggling with religious doubts and difficulties to resort. Nor can we doubt that Olympia, while thus occupying herself, was in that state of religious indifferentism, which she subsequently as we have seen, regarded as one of perdition.

Another extant fragment of her composition, which is marked by its subject as belonging to the last year of her court life, places her before us, still as the heathen Muse, drawing all her inspiration and her imagery from pagan sources, even on an occasion which might seem by its nature to require, if merely as a matter of art, a Christian treatment.

Cardinal Bembo died on the 18th of February 1547; and his loss, keenly felt by the literary world in all parts of Italy, was especially lamented in Ferrara, where he had been so well known and highly valued by all the learned society gathered there. Bembo was, it is true, a Churchman of the old school of Leo X.'s easy going days, who found more pleasure in reading Plato than St. Paul, and liked Cicero infinitely better than the vulgate. Though inclined in all ways to liberal opinions, he probably would have had as little disposition to meddle in the controversy between the old and new theology, as many a 'greek-play-learned Bishop of George III's time, would have felt to be made

moderator between the "high" and "low" schools of our own day. Cardinal as he was, he might no doubt have been permitted to be present at any of those little gatherings of the unorthodox, under the rose, in the apartments of the Duchess, without danger to any of the set; and if he had there heard Olympia's Boccaccio translations, he would have laughed at the fun, and been delighted with the classical latinity as much as any there. And this aspect of very mildly ecclesiastical literary Mæcenas-ship was doubtless that under which the amiable and generally beloved Cardinal had appeared to Olympia.

Yet, had her mind not been still in 1547 wholly uninfluenced by any deep religious impressions, she would not have written on the death of a prince of the Church in so thoroughly a heathen spirit as that of the following lines:*

"Bembo, the great light of the sea-girt queen,
The Muse's glory, Bembo hath gone hence;
Nor left his equal 'mong the sons of men
In noble deeds, or witching eloquence.
For Tully's self, with Hermes by his side,
Recross'd the Stygian flood, when Bembo died."

Such as may be gathered from these productions and occupations, and from her own subsequent reminiscences, were Olympia's thoughts and views of life and death up to this her twenty-first year. To her, indeed, whose being had as yet been stirred by no deeper feeling than gratified love of approbation, congenial friendship, and enthusiasm for her favourite studies, the age in which she was living might have appeared one of "renaissance," as it has since been discovered to have been. Not because she was able

* For the original Greek, see Note 7.

to look out far, but because her view was as yet so circumscribed. The social earthquake which was heaving the world around her, had not yet awakened her from her dream-life among "the haunts of the Muses."

Her talk with Lavinia della Rovere on the great topics which were agitating the world, election, grace, free will, and justification, was only such as may serve curiously to indicate how thoroughly the general mind must have been saturated with speculations on such subjects, when two girls, neither of them feeling strongly on the matter, could not meet and make friends without diversifying their Boccaccio readings and Ciceronian studies with chat on the difficulties of predestination. The outside air must have been very highly charged with an electricity of thought that boded stormful changes. For the meeting and shock of large masses of human thought always is a portent indicating that much change is at hand. Absence of much thought is an indispensable condition of stability.

But the time was now come when Olympia was to be waked from her Helicon dreams, and to be summoned very suddenly to descend from her calm Parnassus heights, step out into this storm-atmosphere, and find herself under circumstances wholly unknown to "Apollo and the Æonian maids."

CHAPTER V.

Dark days.—The great question begins to be answered.

In 1548 Peregrino Morato fell ill. The master's chair was empty; the scholar's desks,—those school-like looking desks, which we may still see sculptured on the monumental stones of old sixteenth century professors in academic Bologna—were vacant; the last new edition, issued by Aldus, beautiful with the delicately-cut types of Francesco da Bologna, and damp from the press of neighbouring Venice, remained half-cut; and the wearied scholar, old, we are told,* and broken down before his time, lay on his poor pallet.

Olympia hurried from the court to her father's bed-side. It was the first call to her of painful duty, a great epoch in every life! Suddenly from the midst of her bright-hued dream-life, her "Muses' haunts," and gay poetical imaginings, she was called to face some of the sternest realities, that post themselves like sentinels inevitable in the smoothest path of mortal existence. Suffering to be ended only by dissolution,—the mysterious departure of the loved one for that dim uncertain cloudland, the existence and nature of which have hardly hitherto been realised, but which henceforward will be invested with all the

* Olymp. Mor. Oper., cited by Bonnet.

interest attaching to the home of those who have been our home-mates,—the newness of that solitude that first teaches the startled heart the meaning of those dreary words, never! never more!—these are the divining rods that first reveal the hidden wealth dormant beneath the flower-decked surface of many a gifted nature.

Olympia's loving watch by the bedside of her father was considerably prolonged, as he sank gradually to his rest; and finally closed his eyes tranquil in the assurance that the position which Olympia's rare talents and acquirements had attained for her, would enable her to be the stay and protectress of her three young sisters and younger brother.

But while this scene was passing in the humble home of the worn-out scholar, events of a very different sort were in progress in the palace home she had so recently left.

Anne D'Este, Olympia's friend and companion, though five years her junior, was now seventeen. And her father, the Duke, who had in the earlier part of this year been to Turin for the purpose of meeting there Henry II. of France, the nephew of the Duchess Renée, had then arranged with the King a marriage between her and Francis of Lorraine, afterwards well known to history as the Duc de Guise. On the return of Duke Hercules to Ferrara the marriage was solemnised on the 20th of July, 1548, Louis of Bourbon standing proxy for the bridegroom. "The citizens of Ferrara," we are told,* "were not altogether well pleased with this marriage; but they constrained themselves to put on an air of festivity." There was

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 348.

but little of this, we may be sure, or we should have had the usual accounts of feastings and processions, with the details of the dishes and the dresses, and the cost thereof. The marriage seems to have been done with business-like simplicity; and the young Princess, regretted by a whole city, "who," says Muratori,* "loved and reverenced her beyond all belief," was sent off, to find shortly enough,—she too, as well as her old playmate,—that life had other things in store for her than classical philosophy and dilettante poetry. The Duke, her father, accompanied her as far as the frontier of his states, her mother and two sisters as far as Mantua, and certain ladies of the court as far as Grenoble; and there, the links of the chain that bound her to her home having been thus gradually severed, she was launched into the strange life before her.

Thus, when Olympia had paid the last duties to her father, and returned to the palace, her friend was no longer there, and she found herself dismissed under circumstances that showed her to have fallen under the displeasure of the Duke. This blow followed the other so closely that Olympia admits herself to have been beaten down to the ground by them. And in truth the burden suddenly laid on those young shoulders, which had never yet learned that life had any burdens which could gall the bearer, was a heavy one. A sick mother, three young sisters, and an infant brother in that poverty-stricken mourning home, all looking up to Olympia, the pride of the family, the admired, successful Olympia, the inmate of the palace, whose friends and intimate companions were the great

* Antiq. Esten., tom. iii. p. 371.

ones of the land, and she driven forth into the cold shade of disgrace, just at the moment when there was so much need that some gleams from the brilliant sunshine of her prosperity should have cheered the cold home of the widow and orphaned sisters;—the burden was a heavy one for that young heart, making her first acquaintanceship with sorrow.*

But Olympia struggled bravely with her difficulties. "Haunts of the Muses," and brilliant heathen Undine-life were all left far behind; and that salvation question began to be answered.

The cause of Olympia's disgrace is not clearly apparent. M. Bonnet, who writes her biography with the sympathy of a co-religionist, attributes† it to the evil machinations of one Jerome Bolsec, a name of very ill savour in the annals of Calvinistic Protestantism. The suspicion that Bolsec had a hand in this, as in so much other mischief, would seem to rest on some phrases from a letter of John Sinapi to Calvin, cited by M. Bonnet from the inedited correspondence of that intolerant Geneva pope. But the few words given do not seem at all conclusive on the subject. It may be that the context is more so.

Jerome Hermes Bolsec was at all events a very sorry knave, capable enough of any wickedness of the sort. He had been a Carmelite monk at Paris, and having got into trouble by unorthodox preaching there, fled across the mountains, says Bayle,‡ "to Renée of France, Duchess of Ferrara, the common asylum of those who were persecuted for adhering to the new doctrines." The Duchess made him her almoner, as we learn from Sinapi. And Bayle says that he

* C. S. Curionis Epist., lib. i. p. 11, cited by Bonnet.

† Vie d'Olympia, p. 69. ‡ Articlo Bolsec.

married and practised as a physician at Ferrara, till he was exiled for some unknown cause. He went thence to Geneva, and there had the fatal misfortune to differ from Calvin on some points of doctrine. In one of his pastorals to the Swiss churches, the latter recounts how one day at sermon time "this rogue got up and said . . . . that men are not saved because they are elect, but are elect because they believe, and that no man is damned by the mere decree of God—*nudo Dei placito*—but those only who have by their own acts deprived themselves of the election common to all." Whereupon, says Theodore Beza,* Calvin "so confuted him, belaboured him, overwhelmed him with testimony from holy writ, passages from St. Augustin, and weighty arguments, that all present, except the brazen-faced monk himself, were ashamed of the figure he cut." Plenty of reason for being ashamed of themselves for all parties concerned doubtless. But Calvin, who was not wont to be contented with mere argumentative belabouring of those who disagreed with him, had him forthwith hauled off to prison, and finally banished from the Canton, as he might have anticipated, when he ventured on the dangerous enterprise of attacking the pet tenet of the Geneva pope's tremendous devil worship.

Bolsec went to Berne, but Calvin's resentment followed him there, and finally harried him out of Switzerland. So he returned to his old faith to spite the reformers, and published lives of Beza and Calvin filled with calumnies so gross that even the controversialists of the Romish Church have admitted their falsehood, and given up Jerome Bolsec as a discredit to either or any party.

* Beza, in Vitâ Calvini.

It may be admitted then that this "most slippery fellow, Almoner to the Court of Ferrara, by your leave," as Sinapi calls him,—*vaferrimus in aulâ Ferrariense, si diis placet, Eleemosynarius*,—was capable enough of making mischief, if his ill passions prompted him to do so. But as he was on his Protestant tack when under the protection of the Duchess, it hardly seems probable that he should have practised against Olympia by denouncing her as a heretic to the Catholics. Yet it seems plain * that her shortcomings in the matter of orthodoxy were the real cause of her disgrace at court. The Duchess, who, as has been seen, was much attached to her, did not, we are told, attempt to interfere in her favour. And the most probable explanation of this abandonment is to be found in the supposition, that the suspicion and ill-repute under which the Duchess herself laboured in the matter of religion, made the danger of openly defending an heretical delinquent greater than she was willing to meet.

"The Duke," writes M. Bonnet,† "urged as he had been for some time past to give proofs of his fidelity to the Apostolic See, watched with a jealous eye the different movements of his court. He believed blindly such calumnies as always find a ready echo in a palace. His wrath, increased by the long suppression of his suspicions, burst forth in violence the more terrible. Olympia was the first victim."

The Duchess was herself by no means in a secure position. When a little after the period in question, one Matthew Ori, a Dominican monk, was sent from Paris to Ferrara, as Grand Inquisitor, Henry II. "who

* Bonnet. Vie, p. 69. † Vie d'Olymp. *ibid.*

knew well enough which foot Renée was lame of,"* especially charged him "to heal her." The monk came and did his best, "gaining some ground, as it seemed by his efforts." For "the Duchess feared her husband and his terrible method of proceeding against those accused of offences in matters of religion."

The Duke's "method" in spiritual affairs became indeed more and more compendious and energetic, as Rome's fears and exigencies became more urgent.

Paul III. died on the 10th of November, 1549, and was succeeded by the Cardinal del Monte, who took the name of Julius III.; an easy and good-natured, though passionate old gentleman, who loved pleasure, quiet, and luxury,—inscribed over the palace he built, "Honeste voluptarier cunctis fas honestis esto!"—"Let all honest men enjoy themselves decently without scruple!"—and troubled himself as little about the business of life as might be.

This was not the sort of man for a persecutor. But the progress of the Inquisition during his reign is a remarkable instance of the degree in which the policy of the Church overrides the individual tendencies of the man who may be the temporary occupant of St. Peter's chair, whenever either the imbecility or the scruples of the latter may seem to endanger the interests of the corporation over which he presides. Whether the moderate, politic, and worldly-minded statesman, Paul III., the poco-curante voluptuary Julius III., or the pure and saintly sage Marcellus II., were pontiff, the crusade against free thought knew no relaxation. Caraffa and his Inquisitors pursued *their* work at least with zeal and unflagging persever-

* Frizzi, vol. iv. p. 359.

ance. Duke Hercules took his cue readily enough as to the duties of an orthodox prince; and as he had the misfortune of labouring under the ill-repute that attached to a wife of notoriously heretical inclinations, it was all the more necessary that he should prove his attachment to the Holy See by the most unmistakeable zeal for the purity of the faith.

Under these circumstances the arrest of a young man named Fannio, at Faenza, for holding and disseminating heterodox opinions, was a lucky chance to be made the most of.

At first, however, it seemed that he would turn craven, and show no sport. The unhappy man had a wife tenderly attached to him, and her tears and entreaties induced him to recant, and accept his liberty as the price of declaring that he believed what his persecutors and judges knew perfectly well he did not believe. But his life became intolerable to him under such conditions. Though he had forced his tongue to utter the lying words that were the price demanded for his life, he could not live up to his lie; so he "relapsed," was again arrested, and this time thrown into the dungeons of Ferrara.

Some time elapsed, while his "trial" for heresy was going through the regular edifying forms before the tribunal of the Inquisition at Rome. Condemnation was of course perfectly certain; and the terror among the numerous band of more or less suspected Protestants at Ferrara was great. Yet, hazardous as it must have been to attract attention by any such manifestation of sympathy, we are assured,* that many visited him in his prison, and "were consoled by his exhortations."

* Histoire des Martyrs, cited by Bonnet, p. 74.

It seems strange that such visits should have been permitted. The Inquisition which had thrown him into prison for preaching, could hardly intend that he should have the means of continuing the offence with all the extra prestige of martyrdom. And the fact would seem to indicate, that the "secular arm," or at least those subordinate executive officers of its will who had not the same reasons for being in love with orthodoxy that moved the prince, had little sympathy with the new persecuting tribunal recently established among them, and seconded its intentions as little as might be.

But it is still more surprising to find, that among these clandestine visitors to this poor Fannio in his prison were the lady Lavinia della Rovére and her friend Olympia. Lavinia then dared to remain on terms of intimacy with the disgraced favourite, when all, as she complains deserted her. Lavinia ventured to seek her friend out in her humble home, and risk subjecting herself to the same suspicions which weighed so heavily on Olympia. But surely this dangerous expedition indicates a notable change of mind and feeling in both these young women, since but a year or so ago. It is but a very little time since those conversations, in which the difficulties of the doctrine of predestination prevented the young friends from accepting the religion of the reformers; and since Olympia's state of mind on religious matters was such as to lead her subsequently to think that "it would have been all over with her and her salvation," if she had remained longer at court. And now, after the lapse of a few months, we find the youthful pair sufficiently interested in the faith for which a martyr is about to suffer, to visit him in his dungeon, and "find consolation" from his exhortations!

Or should we rather suppose, that deeper thought, a more serious interest, and ultimate complete adoption of the persecuted faith on the part of Olympia and her friend, were the consequences, rather than the cause of their visit to Fannio in his dungeon; and that mere female compassion and sympathy with a fellow-unbeliever at least, if not as yet a fellow-believer, led them to the prison. It is probable enough, that the first heart-deep seeds of conviction fell into Olympia's mind during that solemn and affecting prison conference. It is a property of persecution to operate thus on generous and noble hearts. The desolate, disheartening, and precarious situation of Olympia's own fortunes, and the severe lesson she had so recently received on the vanity and instability of worldly prosperity, were well calculated to prepare her heart for the martyr's teaching, and open it to the emotional reception of a faith, which, according to the avowal of its adherents, cannot approve itself to the reasoning faculties.

With a strange and solemn authority,—almost as of one speaking from beyond the awful boundary line, he was so soon to cross—the words of that noble heroic man must have sunk deep into the hearts of the young women. For noble and heroic,—let more ignoble natures chatter what trash they may of gratified vanity, obstinacy, and such futilities in the vain attempt to bring down the heroic to their own level,—noble and heroic, with a heroism inferior to none other practicable by man, and wholly unmodified by the intellectual value of the conviction for which a martyr dies—is the soul, that true to its own indefeasible independence refuses, in the face of all the worst the body and the heart lacerated in its affections can suffer, to abdicate its right of self-sovereignty.

And like all noble emotions, it is a contagious heroism. While the terrible circumstances of the place and scene, never to be forgotten by either of them, spoke fearful warning of the not improbable consequences of the nascent convictions even then rising in their minds, their courage was stimulated to confront whatever danger might arise from the exercise of free thought.

So Fannio and Duke Hercules both had their triumph. The martyr hung, burned, and the ashes of his body thrown to the winds in the market-place of Ferrara, died a free man, lord of his own soul, and conscious of having implanted in many another breast the faith for which he suffered. The Duke showed his subjects what came of presuming to have an opinion on matters of faith, secured the approbation of his own conscience, and approved himself a faithful and meritorious son of Holy Mother Church.

It was not however till 1551, some three years after Olympia's disgrace and ejection from the palace, that Fannio was, after long imprisonment, burned on the Piazza of Ferrara, the first, but not the last victim of the Duke's anxiety to conciliate the Church. And we have other indications, besides this notable prison scene, that this time of difficulty and tribulation was a period of rapid spiritual growth to her. It is difficult to imagine a more violent contrast, than that between the brilliant palace life which eight years had made habitual to her, and the pale existence, made up wholly of those elements both so new to her, duties and difficulties, which passed in the narrow home overshadowed by the cloud of disgrace, and tenanted by a helpless family of five women and an infant brother, whose education was one of Olympia's most pleasing duties.

Small space in her day now for polishing Greek and Latin verses, or composing dissertations on the Stoic philosophy! But two fragments of four lines each, one in Latin, and one in Greek, have been preserved, as the productions of this period of her life, passed in quite other "haunts" than those of the Muses. The old classic "Grecian virgin" tone is no longer discoverable in them; and the topics show that her mind was busy with an entirely different order of ideas.

Olympia was now about twenty-three years old, and still single; and interestingly enough the Latin quatrain above mentioned indicates that her mind had been dwelling on the subject in connection with her religious aspirations:—

"Quæ virgo est, nisi mente quoque est et corpore virgo,
Hæc laudem nullam virginitatis habet.
Quæ virgo est, uni Christo nisi tota dicata est,
Hæc Veneris virgo est, totaque mancipium."

Or, in lines as poor and flat as the original, but not more so:—

"The virgin, who is not such in her soul,
Small praise of her virginity can have,
If Christ alone have not her being's whole,
She is but Venus' bondsmaid and her slave."

Curious to note, that the mental daring which had led to rebellion against Church authority on questions of justification and free will, had not strength of wing or originality enough to see the truth in a much simpler matter, detect the fallacy of the Church's entire system of celibacy, and comprehend that there can be nothing meritorious in *wilfully* abandoning all the most sacred duties of womanhood.

The Greek lines mentioned compare the consolation

that an afflicted heart derives from the contemplation of a crucified Saviour, with the healing virtue of the brazen serpent set up by Moses in the wilderness.

Thus passed two years of trouble and sorrow, which left our Undine-Muse a very different being from what she had been before their discipline. That it was painful enough may be read in a letter from her to Celio Curione, in which she looks back on these dark days.

"After my father's death, I remained alone, betrayed, abandoned by those who ought to have supported me, and exposed to the most unjust persecution. My sisters were involved in my misfortune, and received only ingratitude in return for the devotion and services of so many years. How great was my grief under these afflictions you may easily believe. Not one of those we had in other times deemed our friends, dared to manifest the least interest in us; and we were in so deep a pit of adversity, that it appeared impossible for us ever to escape from it."

There was at least one friend who had been tried in the furnace of adversity, and not found wanting, the brave and noble-hearted Lavinia della Rovere. But this exception Curio was able to supply for himself. He knew that Lavinia had remained, and was still the friend and frequent correspondent of Olympia.

Our heroine has thus been brought to her twenty-fourth year. The present is hard and unkindly around her. Suspicion, neglect, and all the anxious ignoble cares attendant on poverty, had by a sudden scene-shifting taken the places of luxurious ease, admiration, flattery, and troops of friends. The future was dark and precarious. The bad times were every day

becoming worse for those on whom any taint of heresy had ever rested.

In short, our gifted Muse stood bare and desolate, and shivering in the midst of a very unharmonious world in most sad and pitiable plight.

But the salvation question was beginning to be answered.

CHAPTER VI

The question fully answered at last.—Farewell, Ferrara!—Welcome inhospitable Caucasus.—Omne solum forti patria est.

YES! the question was beginning to get answered; beginning, not more as yet. The process of life-discipline, which was to "save" Olympia, to rescue the fine moral gifts and capabilities from suffocation in an element of unrealities, dream-life and Undine-Museship, and to develope the latent capacities of nobleness in her nature, and set her well forward in the Godward path, which shall be, Faith hopes, pursued hereafter, —this was beginning to make its operation appreciable. The baptism of tears had done much. Olympia herself thought that the question had been already answered satisfactorily and in full. She had "got religion," as certain modern sectaries phrase it. And though the special peculiarities of her creed, as professed by her hierophants, are as little calculated to elevate the heart, or enlarge the understanding, as any theory of divine world-governance can well be imagined to be, the religion she had got was a persecuted religion, and derived from that fact an immense saving power, not naturally its own.

But creeds are shown unmistakeably enough to have their home and fatherland in the brain; by the constant exhibition of their powerlessness over the heart; which persists in willing good or evil with most illogical indo-

pendence of the brain's theories. And human beings accordingly wear their creeds with a difference. Thus these lamentable election and predestination theories, mad and ungodly as they may be, as intellectual beliefs, yet, by the virtue of the persecution with which they were visited,—a virtue addressing itself directly to the heart—served to commence the work of Olympia's rescue from heathendom. But other influences were needed for the maturing of the noble picture of womanhood which her completed career offers us. And these were now ready at her need.

Italy is still the home of art. The citizens of the transalpine nations still flock to her schools of painting, sculpture, and music. But in all else she must submit to be the scholar of her former pupils. It was not so in the sixteenth century. In those days Germans, Englishmen, and Frenchmen thronged the celebrated universities of Italy for instruction in law, science, medicine, and "the humanities." Italy was still the acknowledged leader of European civilisation, though on the very eve of ceasing to be so. Already the orthodox prowess of Duke Hercules was busy in bringing about the change. Human thought cannot be made to advance straight along a path walled in on either side, however long the vista within its narrow bounds may seem to be. Men whose occupation is thinking, will not carry it on at all, while large fields of thought are prohibited to them on penalties, such as those incurred by Fannio of Faenza. So the students from the northern side of the Alps began to find that Ferrara, celebrated as a seat of learning though it had hitherto been, was no longer a home for them.

The learned Germans, John and Ghilian Sinapi, were of this number, as was also a young medical

student, their countryman and pupil, who had recently received from the University of Ferrara his degree of Doctor of Medicine, named Andreas Grünthler. He was a native of Schweinfurth, one of the Bavarian free cities on the banks of the Main; and was, we are assured, of "honourable" birth, distinguished talents, and the possessor of a modest patrimony. He had visited most of the cities of Italy, and had acquired a reputation for Greek and Latin scholarship, before he settled at Ferrara, and dedicated himself to the study of medicine under the teaching of the brothers * Sinapi.

Having rehearsed these particulars, it is almost superfluous to add, that Grünthler also was an adherent of the new theology. And for him, too, Ferrara was no longer a safe residence. But the Protestant German student had lost his heart to the brilliant Italian Muse;—lost it in the time of her heathendom, and classical Grecian virginship! And though Ferrara was deserted by his friends and countrymen, though it was about to reek with the blood of martyrs, though it was falling more and more from day to day under the blighting ban of the Inquisition, how could poor Grünthler shake the dust off his feet against it, and go forth, leaving behind him her who had become dearer to him than life, country, or friends;—leaving her, too, now no longer in the pride and prosperity of her Muse-ship, but in poverty, sorrow, and disgrace, and in danger from the same causes, that made his own retreat expedient? His friend and master Sinapi had loved, and wooed, and won an Italian wife, who had accompanied him across the mountains to his northern home. Why should not he do likewise?

* Melchior Adam, Vita Germanorum Medicorum. Art. Grünthler.

But in the glowing Grecian-virgin days of court prosperity, the gulf that seemed to separate the grave German student from the brilliant creature who had witched his heart was too great, and the contrast between her summer-day existence and the pale life which he could offer to her to share, too strongly marked for him to hope that such an offer would be listened to. It appears, indeed, that the offer had been made and rejected; in terms, too, that would effectually have prevented its repetition by a less devoted and self-forgetting lover. That such was the fact may be gathered from a curious passage in the first letter from Olympia to her husband, which, for some incomprehensible motive, her recent French biographer, who gives a translation of the letter in question,* has omitted, without giving any typographical or other intimation, that any part of the sense of the original is absent. After pouring forth her love in the usual delightful fashion of honeymoon letters, she adds, "Were my feelings different I would not conceal them from you, as formerly I plainly told you that I had conceived an aversion to you;"—"*ut ante aperte me tui odium cepisse significabam.*"† It was necessary, it should seem, that that Undine nature should be first exorcised by the touch of sorrow, before the mightier wizard, love, could be allowed to enter, and complete the task of purifying, humanising, and elevating it.

But the dark days came; sorrow did its appointed ministry; and then love spoke, and was listened to. In that time of tribulation and trial, when all the world had suddenly changed its welcoming smile to a frown, when none of those she had once thought her friends

* Bonnet, Vie d'Olymp. p. 202.
† Olymp. Moratæ Opera. Bâle, 1570.

dared to manifest any interest for the disgraced favourite, then Andreas Grünthler dared to woo, and succeeded in inspiring as devoted a love as ever woman's heart felt. Olympia was deeply touched by the noble disinterestedness of her lover's suit. "Neither the resentment of the Duke," she writes, long afterwards, to her earliest friend, Celio Curione, "nor all the miserable circumstances which surrounded me, could induce him to abandon his desire to make me his wife. So great and true a love has never been surpassed."

In Olympia, the unselfish affection of a noble heart evoked, as the sequel of her story shows, a sentiment of equally ennobling devotion. And thus, whatever issue from the predestination maze the puzzled brain may have fancied it had found for itself, the purified heart furnished the completion of the answer to the great salvation question.

The marriage was celebrated in 1550, probably in the last months of that year. A "marriage prayer," in eight Greek verses by Olympia, has been preserved among her works. Her latest biographer* says of these lines, that they are a "chant of Pindar repeated by an echo of the Christian revival at Ferrara"—a performance, one would think, nearly equivalent to that of the well-known Irish echo that answered "How do you do?" by "Pretty well, I thank you." The lines in question touch, in very irreproachable Greek, on the analogy between marriage and the mystic union of Christ with the souls of the faithful, and are remarkable only as indicating how complete was the change in the tone of the poet's mind, since she classicalised on

* Bonnet, Vie d'Olympe p. 79.

death in the manner we have seen in a former chapter.

Deep-felt and complete as we may suppose the happiness Olympia and her husband felt at their union, the marriage must have partaken more of a solemn than of a festive character. There were many difficulties and uncertainties yet before them. To remain in Ferrara, heretics as they were, whose heresy was every day becoming dearer to them, and the open profession of it a craving desire; when Fannio was daily expecting to be brought out of his dungeon to a martyr's death; when the Inquisition was craving for fresh victims; and when the marriage itself was deemed an offence by the Duke, was out of the question. Yet it was hard to leave a mother and sisters; and that rough northern land across the mountains, where freedom of conscience might indeed be hoped for, nevertheless was not itself by any means in a condition to offer her a secure and quiet home.

So far was this from being the case, that Grünthler deemed it necessary to submit to a separation from his wife almost immediately after his marriage, that he might, before taking her to Germany, go thither alone to fix on, and prepare, a home for her. His hope was to obtain a professorial chair in some of the medical schools of Bavaria or the Palatinate, and to be able to return to Olympia in the spring of 1551. In the meantime, he had the great consolation of leaving her under the protection of Lavinia della Rovere; whose considerable influence, though it seems to have been exercised in vain to obtain Olympia's restoration to the good graces of the ducal family, yet probably sufficed to prevent any measures of active persecution against her.

Here is the letter above mentioned in its entirety. Perhaps some reader may like to see, that a young wife's honeymoon letter was in 1550 pretty much the same thing, word for word, as a similar effusion in 1850 might be. Of no letter on any other topic, three hundred years old, could the same be said.

"Your departure," writes the lovely wife, "was a great grief to me, and the long absence following it the greatest misfortune that could have befallen me. For when I have you by my side, I am not tormented by the anxieties that now beset me. I am always imagining that you have had a fall, or broken your limbs, or been frozen by the extreme cold. And perhaps I have not imagined anything worse than the reality! You know the poet's saying—

"Res est soliciti plena timoris amor."

"Love is a thing compact of jealous fears."

Now, if you would alleviate this haunting anxiety, which I cannot shake off, you will, if possible, contrive to let me know what you are doing, and how you are. For, I swear to you, that my whole heart is yours, as you know full well. Did I feel differently, I would not hide it from you; even as I formerly owned to you that I had conceived an aversion to you. Would that I were with you, my husband, if only the better to tell you the immensity of my love. You would not believe how I pine in your absence. There is nothing so difficult or so disagreeable that I would not do to please you, my husband. But can you wonder that this delay is hateful to me; for true love abominates and will not endure delay. Any other trial to which I could be put would be better for me than this. I beg and beseech you, therefore, to leave no stone unturned

to bring about our meeting this summer as you promised. I know well that your affection is equal to mine; so I will not weary you by urging this point further. Nor have I said thus much in any wise to blame you, but only to remind you of your promise, though I know that you are fully occupied with all these cares."

Thus much may be found in "the complete letter writer," under the heading, "A young wife's first letter to an absent husband." What follows is of more interest.

"As to my dresses, I do not think that it would be becoming to make application for them to the court. The Duchess sent me word by one of her women, that it was not true that the wife of the most noble Camillo (Orsini) had said any thing to her about sending greetings to her daughter. (Her daughter-in-law, Lavinia della Royere, wife of her son Paolo Orisni, seems to be intended.) She said, however, that she would permit it to be done, since her daughter (that is the Duchess's daughter, Leonora, apparently) wished it; but that she (Lavinia) had begged one dress for me, which she (the Duchess) would not give me before her (Lavinia's) return. I think that she answered thus: that I might see that she did nothing for my sake, but for that of Lavinia; and that she might gratify Lysippa, who was, I believe, with her at the time. But it is better to be silent respecting a matter which is plain to everybody. In any case, I scarcely think that I shall get the dresses. Adieu." *

It is difficult to understand what the connection can have been between the salutations sent or not sent by the wife of Camillo Orsini, and the restoration of

* Note 8.

Olympia's dresses. Thus much, at all events, seems clear however, that when Olympia fell into disgrace at the court, her sovereigns stooped to, what to our notions would appear, the utterly incredible meanness of retaining the dresses beloning to her that happened to be under their roof!. We may suppose that these dresses had been probably enough supplied by the Duchess. It may be also remembered, that such things were of very much greater value, both absolutely and relatively to other property, than they are now. Yet, if originally furnished by the Duchess, they had been given to Olympia as a part of the remuneration for her services; she evidently considers them as her own property. And this forcible detention of a dismissed servant's wearing apparel cannot but be felt to indicate on the part of these princes, in the midst of their ostentatious magnificence, a degree of insensibility to any of the feelings that we compendiously term gentleman-like, that makes the circumstance a very curious trait of the manners of the period.

It would seem clear, also, that the Duchess Renée was actively hostile to her former favourite. And if the phrase, in connection with Lysippa, to the effect that it was better to say nothing of so notorious a matter, is to be supposed to allude to some court intrigue in which she was concerned, it would seem that Jerome Bolsec was not altogether the contriver of her disgrace. It is remarkable that her old friend Curio, in a letter written from Bâle to a friend of his, who had asked him about Olympia, in giving a little sketch of her career, suppresses all mention of this court disgrace,* merely saying that she had been called

* C. S. Curione, Xysto Betulsio, 21st letter in the "Epistolæ," Operæ Moratæ, Bâle, 1570.

to the court to share the studies of the Princess Anne, and that she had after that married Andreas Grünthler.

Her husband's absence was a sore trial to Olympia, which demanded all, or somewhat more than all, her fortitude.

Her first letter to her husband was soon followed by a second, imploring him to hasten his return. "The uncertainty of the time fixed for your return, and for our departure from Ferrara, causes me incessant torment." She beseeches him not to conceal from her any bad news respecting their prospects. "Should you be called on to meet any danger, which God forbid, I insist on sharing it with you. But above all, my well-beloved, in these so difficult circumstances, be sure that God is our most powerful protector." She exhorts him to remember that God granted the prayer of Elias, so that no rain fell for three years and six months, and to confide in him for support. "My days," she concludes, "are passed in tears; and I find no alleviation for my sorrows but in invoking the Author of all mercies. May He be also your refuge and your asylum. Write to me very soon, to let me know when I shall see you, and do not set out on your journey without sure guides. Adieu."

She writes five letters, following rapidly one after the other, to John Sinapi, who was now established at Würzburg, urging him to accelerate her husband's return. "I again and again implore you," she says in one of these, "not to detain him, who is dearer to me than life, longer than one month at the furthest. Send him back to me quickly, if you would not have me, miserable as I am, pine to death of grief."

She reminds him more than once of a volume of her

poems, which she had sent to be presented to the King (Ferdinand, King of the Romans), and to the great Augsburg merchant, Raymond Fugger, in hopes of interesting them in her husband's favour.

The lady Lavinia had also promised to induce her husband and father-in-law to interest themselves in Grünthler's favour; and there is a letter from her, received by Olympia at this time, in which she tells her friend, that she had after some difficulty succeeded in accomplishing this. She was herself not happy. "As for me," she writes, "understand that my affairs become more and more hopeless from day to day." She concludes her letter by saying that she should have written it in Italian, were it not that she knew that Olympia liked better to read Latin.

Lavinia, however, was at Ferrara during the greater part of Grünthler's absence; and her society was Olympia's greatest comfort. There is a dialogue preserved in the volume of her works between the two friends, which probably embodies the substance of conversations that really passed between them.

"Will you always live then in the midst of your books," Lavinia begins, "and never take any repose, Olympia? Rest awhile, and you will return with renewed vigour to your favourite studies."

"Would to Heaven, my friend," says Olympia, after some few words on her devotion to her study,—"Would to Heaven that I had not been so long plunged in oblivion of the only truths worthy of occupying our thoughts. I fancied myself learned, because I read the books of worldly philosophers, and intoxicated myself with the poison of their writings. But just when I was most puffed up with the praises of men, I made the discovery of my profound ignorance. I had wandered

so far from the truth, as to imagine the universe to be the production of chance, without governance and without God." . . . .

"But Italy," rejoins Lavinia, "had before this rung with the fame of your piety and your virtues."

"It is true;" answers her friend; "and perhaps this fame may have reached you—

"'Audieras et fama fuit;'

but if men only knew how to estimate at their just worth the flattery addressed to princes and those around them, they would have judged me less favourably. You at least, my friend, must know how far I then was from having any sentiments of true piety."

Lavinia answers, that even so she cannot help admiring the constancy with which Olympia had devoted to the acquisition of learning those long hours which others employ "in adorning themselves, in arranging their hair, and in running after vain pleasures. What especially surprises me is, that you could remain faithful to those studies in the years of your youth, in spite of the raillery of the men and girls, who were always dinning into your ears that life had something else to do, and that husbands would look more after what you possessed than what you knew."

"It is the Lord who willed it so!" returns Olympia; and at this point the dialogue, which it must be admittted has been composed by our Muse in a rather egotistic tone, passes off into a kind of rhapsody, in which the writer sets forth the vanity of earthly things, and the inestimable price of heavenly wisdom.

Meanwhile Grünthler had been but very partially successful in the objects of his journey. Germany was in no condition to offer, in any part of it, a desirable

home to a peaceful student and his wife. True, that in many of its cities the profession of the reformed faith was a recommendation instead of a sure title to the honours of martyrdom. True, that the new theology had there acquired a respectability of standing, that enabled it to enjoy a share occasionally of the ecclesiastical luxury of persecuting its opponents. But the country was distracted by war or rumours of war on all sides;—war of a different kind, and productive of very different national results from the miserable mercenary contests, which ruined Italy, and only prepared the way for the slavery and degradation of the nation. For the gist of the German fighting, however confused, barbarous, and devastating, was to be found in the determination of men to resist authority and oppression, to have souls of their own, and to say they were their own.

Though the division of the country into two camps by their religious differences enabled princes to play off one part of the people against another in the interests of their own rivalries and ambitions, yet the contests were mostly made to wear the appearance of struggles for the securing of spiritual or civil freedom. And all the misery brought about by them was not therefore unfruitful of good. Though the points in dispute between the rival creeds were often nugatory, though the better sense was not invariably on the side of the reformers, and though good men lamented that Church reform had quitted its proper sphere and duties, when it allied itself with worldly policy and descended from the pulpit into the camp and the battle field, yet even so, and even then, the Reformation was preparing the great career which it has run, and that still before it, from which no man can ever more turn it back.

Charles the Fifth was just then busy in imposing his "Interim" on the German cities. The great council at Trent, which was to "heal the wounds of Christendom," made but small progress in that business; manifested, indeed, a fertility of resource in the discovery of means how not to do any thing of the sort, perfectly marvellous. And Charles, who was perfectly earnest in wishing that these wounds should be healed, or at all events closed up in some sort, for reasons of his own, very much of the nature of those which make a coachman wish that his team may be coupled up, so as to draw well together, became impatient. It struck his royal mind, that the thing must be easy enough if one only went about it in a simple straightforward manner. So he ordered three divines,—Julius Pflug and Helding, on the Catholic side, and one Agricola, a "practical" man, inclined, when he got his cue, to make things pleasant, on the Protestant side,—to draw up a scheme of a good working religion, such as all men might accept without objection,—or despite objection, if it came to that; and to be quick about it. On the 15th of May, 1548, his Majesty was gracious enough to lay the scheme so drawn before the diet; whereupon the Elector of Mentz declared it to be as good a religion as any man need wish for; and being an Archbishop, it was clear that he must know. And this was the celebrated Interim; so named because it professed only to be a provisional faith, for men to live and die—and pay their taxes—by, till such time as what they really were definitively to believe could be got settled for them in a more regular and formal manner.

The indignation and disgust felt at Rome by the regular practitioners at such quack-Pope practice as this, may be easily imagined. The regular-bred Pope

examined his rivals' prescription, and found, as we hear without surprise, "seven or eight heresies in it,"* all clear and evident like so many false quantities in a school-boy's verse task. Evidently a most unworkman-like production!

As to the Protestant cities of Germany, they found the Interim religion to be flat Popery. And the royal quack-Pope had to adopt the orthodox practice in administering it. Augsburg, Ulm, Strasburg, Bremen, Lubeck, Hamburg, Magdeburg, Constance, and many other towns would have none of it. And Spanish soldiers had to be employed, with more or less success in different places, in recommending it to their favourable consideration. At Augsburg, Charles placed bodies of these troops at the different gates, and in other commanding positions of the town, then called the members of the municipal government to the town-hall, dismissed them all from their functions, abolished "motu proprio" the entire form of municipal government, and nominated a few creatures of his own to govern the city, each man of whom had sworn to receive and observe the Interim. Ulm he converted much in the same manner, sending off in chains the Protestant preachers. The stout Magdeburgers shut their gates, manned their walls, and stood a siege against the imperial troops and the Interim. For a lay Pope's essay at persecution this was zealous and energetic enough, though falling far short of the true ecclesiastical practice of Inquisition, stake, and faggot.

It might be supposed that Charles would have been too sagacious a man to have imagined that any successful issue could have come of this Interim

* Mendoza. Letter to Charles of 10th June, 1848, cited by Ranke. Book 3, sec. 1.

scheme of his. It seems hardly a thing to have been hoped, that Germany had gone through all the sufferings and sorrows, spiritual and temporal, incidental to a national change of religion, and kicked off the authority of a real Pope, venerable with the prestige of fifteen centuries, to submit quietly to a new quack Pope, whose whole theological apparatus consisted of men-at-arms and gunpowder. If men were to submit to an imposed creed, it was better to take one without seven or eight heresies in it. No very profound knowledge of the human heart, one would think, were needed to enable a sagacious ruler of men to anticipate failure for such a plan; and Charles has the reputation of having been such. But it strikes one, in considering this and a hundred other similar mistakes by the Louis XIVths. and other great masters of kingcraft, as doubtful how far it is practicable for such personages to attain to any knowledge of the plebeian human heart. Of the hearts of princes, ministers of state, popes, cardinals, diplomatists, ambassadors, and such,—though hearts are not generally supposed to be worn on embroidered sleeves,—a royal craftsman practised in the business may know a thing or two; may, perhaps, if acute, obtain some uncertain notion of the hearts of gentlemen-ushers, ladies of honour, grand chamberlains, and other such samples of mankind: but it would seem as if such knowledge were rather calculated to lead a royal philosopher astray in dealing with humanity outside the palace gates.

The mistake into which the sagacious Charles was thus led in the matter of the Interim, was causing throughout Germany the uncomfortable state of confusion that has been described when poor Andreas Grünthler, flying from persecution in Italy, came to

seek for a home and the means of supporting a wife in his native land.

The search, as we have seen, became prolonged, to Olympia's great distress, far beyond what the young couple had calculated on. Grünthler's profession, indeed, was one which the misrule of monarchs has no tendency to render superfluous. On the contrary, he had soon occasion to find that it provided him with work in more than abundance. But then, as still, in Germany, the professional chairs in the Universities afforded the most reliable prospect of bread, with some small modicum of butter, to a studious and married man. Grünthler's education and talents well fitted him to teach, and that was his ambition. But town councillors turned violently out of their offices, or in daily dread of being so, and burghers in distress, consternation, and hot debate, between temporal and spiritual ruin, had scant attention to give to such matter. Besides, the lecture-rooms were empty, the students dispersed to their own homes, as the most necessary place for a man in critical and perilous times, or joining in resistance against the oppression that weighed on the country.

Andreas Grünthler could hear of no such position as he had hoped to find anywhere. Still he had friends who were influential, and much interested in his and his wife's fortunes. John Sinapi was now settled at Würzburg and his brother Chilian at Spire; and both were eager to assist their Ferrara friends in their projects. Hubert Thomas, of Liège, secretary to the Count Palatine, was also their firm friend. But a recommendation to George Hermann, of Augsburg, councillor to the King of the Romans, which had been obtained for Grünthler by Lavinia della Rovere from

her brother-in-law Camillo Orsini, turned out the most immediately valuable. In the impossibility of finding any permanent appointment of the kind desired, this truly friendly man begged the almost despairing professor to bring his wife in the first instance to his house at Augsburg, there to wait till they should be able to see their path in some degree before them.

The proposal opened a harbour of refuge when all the trouble-tossed world seemed to refuse them a resting-place. So poor Andreas hurried back across the Alps to his pining mate, overjoyed to be able to bring her some better tidings than his previous disappointments had enabled him to write to her.

It was decided that they should start from Ferrara for the promised land of free consciences and true religion in the early summer of 1551. How constantly had Olympia been sighing during the months of her solitary life at Ferrara for the coming of this hour! Yet now that it was come, this departure was found to be a very sad business, not to be accomplished without many a wrench of affections rooted in the core of the heart. To leave a mother and three sisters, never in all human probability to be seen again on this side of the grave, was a hard task; and Olympia knew well that such was their parting. In a letter written not long afterwards to Celio Curione at Bâle, she expresses her conviction that she shall never again return to Italy, "where Antichrist is raging with such power."* She would rather indeed, she says, seek a refuge in the furthest and most inclement north than re-cross the Alps. Yet that first quitting Italy—bright, sunny, native Italy—and Ferrara, where she had known so

* Olympia, Curioni, 23rd epist. Op. Ol. Morat. Bâle.

much both of happiness and misery—"Ferrara my ungrateful country," as she calls it in another letter*—was a bitter moment. That crossing of the mountains had, in those days of little travelling and roads dangerous in all ways, something more alarming to the ideas of an Italian girl than any possible migration on earth's surface could now suggest to the most inexperienced traveller. She writes to worthy George Hermann,† when there was a question of some distant appointment for Grünthler, that having followed her husband across the Alps, she could have no difficulty in crossing Caucasus—"inhospitalem Caucasum," in true classic phrase—or accompany him to the uttermost ends of the earth, if it were needed. "Omni solum forti patria est!" she adds. But the greatest trial to her fortitude was the first step beyond the marshy plains around persecuting, ungrateful Ferrara.

Painful partings are always most painful to those who are left behind. The necessity of action, and the excitement of going forth to meet new scenes and new fortunes, brace the nerves and give diversion to the grief of those who are to depart; and Olympia was not leaving him who was of all the world dearest to her. But what must the parting have been to the poor mother! Her old friend and former guest, Celio Curione, writing to her several years afterwards, recurs to the sorrows of that time. "The pangs of that departure," he says, "must have been even as the pangs of death when you felt that probably in this life you would never see her again. And truly you might well feel that the separation of death was not very different from that caused by so great a distance."

* Olympio Laurentia Schleenvio, 27th epistle in her collected works.
† Olym. G. Hermanno. 34th of the collection.

In fact, the poor mother never did again see her Olympia. And she was soon after left in entire solitude at Ferrara, in consequence of what she was bound to consider the good fortune of each of her three remaining daughters finding honourable positions. Lavinia della Rovere took one of them with her to Rome. Another was attached to the Lady Helena Rangona de Bentivoglio; and the third to that lady's daughter, who was married at Milan. This last, as we learn from a letter from Olympia to Curione, became the wife of a young man of that city, "an only son, very well off in the world, who asked no dower with her." With them, it would seem, the mother found at last a happier home than she had known since she became a widow.

Worthy Andreas Grünthler took his young brother-in-law Emilio, then eight years old, with him and his wife into Germany.

At length the last words were said, and the little party turned their faces towards the mountains, and began their journey by the pass of the Brenner. There were more points than one in their route which might have been dangerous to them. At Trent the Council was sitting; and all travellers through a city so occupied were likely enough to be subjected to questionings that might lead known fugitives from religious persecution into trouble. At Innspruck the imperial army was quartered, which was not calculated to make the passage through it agreeable or safe to such wayfarers as our friends.

"The beauty of the season, and the magnificence of the scenery that discovered itself at each step to the eyes of the travellers," says Olympia's French*

* Bonnet. Vie. p. 90

biographer, "without doubt distracted them from the sad thoughts that assailed them on their way to exile."

But it is to be feared that this is an anachronism. The snow-capped mountains, the pine-clad valleys, the precipices, the tumbling waters, and the craggy peaks, were all there then as picturesque-hunting tourists find them now. But men, Italians especially, did not admire such things in the fifteenth century. They only saw "inhospitalem Caucasum" in such scenes. And to our little party it was Caucasus infested with ravening bishops and their officials, with men-at-arms and camp-followers. Under which circumstances it is to be feared that they took small comfort from any appreciation of the picturesque.

But the mountains and all their dangers were happily passed, and the hospitable roof of warm-hearted George Hermann in the good city of Augsburg safely reached by the three travellers about the middle of the year 1551.

CHAPTER VII.

At Augsburg,—and at Würzburg.

AUGSBURG, in the middle of the sixteenth century, had a fair claim to be entitled the Athens of the North. Among the cities of Germany it held a place similar to that occupied by Florence among those of Italy. And in both instances the primacy attained in arts and letters had depended on the fostering hand of successful commerce. That which the Medici had done for Florence, the Fugger family had done for Augsburg. The latter name has not at the present day the world-wide celebrity of the former. But then the Fuggers never exalted themselves to sovereignty on the ruin of their country; and flunkeydom has accordingly less assiduously embalmed their memory.

In the sixteenth century, however, their name was celebrated throughout Europe. Rabelais, writing from Rome to the Bishop of Maillezais in the year 1536, tells him that Philip Strozzi was esteemed the richest merchant in Christendom, with the sole exception of the Fuggers. Charles V. was their guest when at Augsburg; and an anecdote has been preserved of the fire in the imperial bedchamber under their roof having been made of a faggot of cinnamon, lighted with an I. O. U. of his majesty's to a large amount. It is true that the cinnamon may probably have been the more costly part of the sacrifice. Towards the end of the

century Dominick Custos, an engraver of Antwerp, published a magnificent folio volume of a hundred and twenty-seven portraits, "Fuggerorum et Fuggerarum;" a somewhat cacophonous title, the strange sound of which has amusingly caused the book to be classed in more than one catalogue by un-historical bibliopoles among botanical works, under the impression that the ladies and gentlemen of the great merchant family were specimens of ferns.

When Olympia was at Augsburg, the heads of the family were the brothers Anthony and Raymond Fugger. A contemporary * writer has left us a curious account of the magnificence of their residence. He speaks of the abundance of pictures by the great Italian masters; of a large collection of portraits by Lucas Cranach; and especially of a most extensive museum of antiquities,—mosaics and statues in bronze and marble; —"all the divinities of Olympus, Jove with his thunderbolt, Neptune with his trident, Pallas with her ægis." He mentions also a collection of medals occupying one room. The number of fragments of antique sculpture was wonderful. "We stood long in admiration before a head of the God of Sleep, crowned with poppies, and having the eyes closed. We saw several heads of Bacchus of colossal size, ornamented with ivy and vine-leaves. We were told that these remains of antiquity had been brought together from nearly every part of the world, but chiefly from Greece and Sicily. For Raymond, though but very slightly tinctured with learning himself—*litterarum minime expers*,—has so great a love for antiquity, that he grudges no expense for the pleasure of possessing these things; which

* Beatus Rhenanus in a letter, which is the 50th of the century of Epist. Philolog. published by Goldast.

indicates the truly noble and generous character of the man." He possessed also, despite his want of erudition, a library, of which the librarian, Jerome Wolff, declared in Greek verse, that it contained more books than there were stars in the heavens;* and he commissioned men who had the learning he wanted, to compile a collection of ancient inscriptions, which was published in folio at Ingoldstadt in 1534.†

It was to this munificent Raymond Fugger that Olympia had charged her friend John Sinapi to present a volume of her verses. As they were of course written in Greek or Latin, we must suppose, unless, indeed, the "minime expers" of Rhenatus is to be very widely understood, that the Augsburg Mæcenas could not read a word of them. Moreover, the wealthy and worthy merchant would seem to have been far from coming up to Olympia's standard in matters of religion. For the Fuggers were among those to whom Charles committed the government of Augsburg, when he turned out the old municipality; and all those so appointed, we are told, swore to observe the papistical Interim. We are driven, therefore, to the conclusion, that the religious world of the fifteenth century was so totally dissimilar from that of the nineteenth, as not to be extreme to mark the backslidings of men whose position, like that of Raymond Fugger, put "so large a power for good" into their hands.

We have no means of knowing whether the presentation of the poems to the great merchant was followed by any special result. But that the reception of the wanderers at Augsburg generally was flattering and

* Bayle, Art. Fugger. Note C.
† Bonnet, Vie d'Olymp. p. 93.

satisfactory is recorded in a letter* from Olympia to Gregorio Giraldi, the gouty old friend, now drawing very near his end, who used to write verses to her in her girlhood. "We are still," she writes, "with our excellent friend; and I am delighted with my stay here. I pass my entire day in literary pursuits—me cum Musis delecto;—and have no business to draw me away from them. I also apply myself to the study of Holy Writ, which is so productive of peace and contentment. Nothing can be more favourable than the reception my husband has met with in this town. Our affairs are looking well, and, by God's help, will have a happy issue."

A few months before the date of this letter, while Olympia was pining on account of her husband's absence, she spoke in her dialogue with Lavinia della Rovere, of her regrets at having "intoxicated herself with the poison" of the classical writers. And now we find her again "delighting herself with the Muses." The compatibility of classical studies with a strictly Christian tone and habit of thought and feeling, which many religionists have decided in the negative, seems to have been mooted by Olympia, and by the advice of her learned and devout friends affirmed. For in a letter to Curione written about this time, she says that "since pious men approve it," she will continue her classical studies and writings.

But it would seem, that these "delights with the Muses," however classical, were henceforward for the most part religious in their nature. For almost all that remains of her composition subsequent to this

* The 19th of the collection, as printed at Bâle, in 1570. But neither the dates affixed to these letters, nor the order in which they are printed, are correct.

period, with the exception of her letters, are translations from the psalms into Greek verse. These her husband used to set to music, and the singing of them would often form the evening amusement of their little circle. One of these translations had been sent to Curione, who was probably the chief of those pious friends who encouraged her to continue to write. "I have read," he says, "the psalm that you have translated into Greek, and I am delighted with it. I wish that you would treat more of them in the same way. We should then have no cause to envy the Greeks their Pindar. Persevere, then, my Olympia, in the path to which the Muse invites you. Place upon your brow the sacred laurel; for you have drawn your poetic inspiration from a purer fount than Sappho of old."

The stay of Grünthler, his wife, and their young brother under the roof of George Hermann, was prolonged for several months. The tranquil security of her life there, after all she had gone through during the last two or three years, was extremely soothing and delightful to Olympia. The hoped-for professor's chair was not yet found; but she seems to have been in good hope that it soon would be. In the meantime Grünthler had an opportunity of repaying in some measure the generous hospitality he and his family were receiving. For George Hermann fell seriously ill; and his guest had the pleasure of restoring him to health before he left him.

It was while still at Augsburg that Olympia wrote* to her friend Lavinia urging her to exert herself in every possible way to save the life of Fannio.

"A thousand thanks," she writes, "for your promise

* Letter 17th of the collection

to do all you can in favour of Fannio. Nothing could give me greater pleasure; and I have great hope of what may be done on the occasion of your leaving Ferrara; for I am well aware how powerful is your interest at Rome. Besides, I cannot doubt that the Duke would be willing to gratify you when you are taking leave of him. Entreat him then, if he wishes to do you a favour, to release an innocent man, whose long captivity would have more than expiated his faults, had he been really criminal. That will be the moment to speak, without losing sight of the dictates of prudence, what your heart shall suggest to you.

"'Haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disces.'

Above all, I exhort you not to allow the malevolent representations of designing men to influence your mind in matters pertaining to the pure religion of Christ."

Olympia little understood yet the nature of the power against which she hoped to prevail. How grimly Caraffa would have smiled at the notion, that his prey could be thus taken from him. A Duke of Ferrara release a convicted and relapsed heretic to pleasure a silly woman, herself more than suspected of sympathy with his errors! Or that that contemptible voluptuary at Rome, simoniacal usurper of Peter's keys, dare to absolve him whom the Holy Inquisition has condemned! Not while John Peter Caraffa keeps watch, as Inquisitor, over the interests of the Church! As to the Duke, it would have been saying that his soul was his own, contrary to all contract, and saying so in a most dangerous and blasphemous manner. And had even indolent, easy-going Julius III. dreamed of dipping the tips of his jewelled fingers in such troubled waters, he

would have found, as many a Pope has found, that powerful as the *Servus Servorum* might be while working in accordance with the powers of the machinery of which he is a part, he was powerless to stop the operation of it. Lavinia della Rovere, her sister-in-law Maddalena Orsini, and the other generous and gentle souls, who dreamed of attempting the absurd quixotism of speaking mercy to a Church in danger, succeeded only in leaving to other and happier times a record, still by no means unneeded, of womanly protest against priestly intolerance.

In the same letter to Curione, in which Olympia speaks of her intention not to give up her classical studies, she says that she and her husband would willingly settle at Bâle if there were any prospect of Grünthler's being able to obtain either medical practice or teaching there. For still the future was all uncertain before them; and yet the time was come when they determined on no longer trespassing on the hospitality of their generous host. John Sinapi, now established as physician to the prince-bishop at Würzburg, had pressed them to stay awhile with him; and they accordingly removed from Augsburg to that city. Sinapi had been the master of both husband and wife at Ferrara. His wife, Francesca Bucyronia, had been Olympia's friend at court there; and the reunion of the party, under circumstances so widely different from all that surrounded them in Italy, must have brought back many a recollection of those old times, and brilliant scenes, which every one of the party was so thankful to have exchanged for their present pale, and sometimes difficult, northern life.

Sinapi and Francesca had several children. A niece, Bridget, also lived with them; and in one of Olympia's

letters of this time we find a Leonora mentioned as one of the inmates of the family, and we get a fleeting glimpse of the party gathered round the good physician's hearth in the evening, with books and learned talk, while Leonora taught the girls embroidery,—"docens ambas acu pingere."

The tenour of this quiet life was one day broken by an accident that happened to the child Emilio. He fell from a high window to the ground on some rough stones, and it was thought that he must be killed. He was little hurt, however; and, as Olympia writes, "lives and is well, to the great surprise of every one." But the incident is only worth mentioning for the sake of Olympia's method of "improving" it. This happened, she writes,* "that we might know by experience that God hath given order to his angels to bear up his sons in their hands." And again; "Thus God, who can raise up even the dead from the grave, is wont to defend and preserve his own in safety."

It is painful to find one, for whose character we cannot but have the warmest esteem, and with the feelings of whose heart we can always sympathise, forming for herself such theories of the Divine government of the world. How is it possible, we ask ourselves, that such a one can have supposed the occurrences of life to be arranged by a constant succession of miracles, so that there is no reason to anticipate that similar causes will produce similar effects? How conceivable, that an Olympia Morata should pronounce all those who fall, and *do* break their bones, to be none of God's own? Her feelings towards her fellow-creatures were assuredly not logically consistent with so monstrous a

* Olymp. Curioni et Georg. Hermanno. Letters 23rd and 34th of the collection.

theory of the Invisible. No! but the creed was held as a creed of the brain; and not arrived at even by the brain by any process of reasoning, but only by intellectual adoption of the theories of others;—probably, even, to a great extent, of their phraseology only. For the most entire sincerity is perfectly compatible with the use of certain phrases imitatively adopted, and believed to be proper to be said in certain conjunctures, the sense, bearing, and consequences of which have never been realised or examined by those who use them.

Olympia and her husband remained with John Sinapi, at Würzburg, till the latter part of October, 1551. It was shortly after the accident of Emilio, that Grünthler received an invitation from the senate of his native town of Schweinfurth to settle himself as physician to the garrison of Spanish soldiers quartered there by the Emperor, when he himself went into winter quarters at Innspruck. Though this was not exactly the kind of employment that he would have wished, yet the proposal was acceptable as coming from his own fellow-citizens; and he was not in a position to allow any opportunity of employment in his profession to escape him. He accepted it. And Olympia, for the first time, was about to find herself in a woman's best and happiest position, a home of her own.

It was but an obscure one to which she was going. But her name was already sufficiently well known in Germany to ensure her carrying with her thither the interest of a large circle of the learned world, especially of such as professed her own faith. There is an amusing indication both of the celebrity her name had acquired, and of the uncertainty, that a small distance could in those days throw over facts of the simplest

kind, in a letter written about this time by Curione to one Xysto Betuleio, which has been already cited. Curione's correspondent had written to him to ask if the name Olympia Morata was in reality that of a living woman; because it was very generally asserted to be a fictitious *nom-de-plume*,—"De Olympia nostra scribis te certiorem fieri cupere, quod plerique fictum nomen arbitrantur." And thereupon he proceeds to give that sketch of her career, which has been before quoted.

In the brilliant springtide of Olympia's career, when she stood before us in Grecian virgin guise, fooled to the top of her bent by the applause and flattery of an entire city, with syntax-laws for a rule of life, a knowledge of words in the place of all experience of things, classicality for a *summum bonum*, and æsthetic appreciation of the beautiful as sole means of satisfying every need and capacity for worship, the question was suggested, shaping itself into the words so familiar, and, howsoever diversely understood, most important to every man,—How is this Olympia to be saved? And the question has been dwelt on, because the peculiar interest attaching to her story is to be found in the particularly well-marked development of the saving process, whether as studied by those who, like herself, deem it to have been accomplished by her adoption of a special creed, or by those who find it in the working of her awakened moral nature. Both to the religionist and the moralist Olympia is a specially "well-marked specimen;" and both will concur in affirming that, whatever may have been the saving influence, a very noble specimen of womanhood was the result.

Now, to one looking from the moral stand-point, it seems, as has been said in a former chapter, that the

question was satisfactorily answered, when the course of our story had shown the heroine under the successive influences of sorrow and adversity, of a true and devoted love, and of the adoption of a persecuted faith, be it a true or false one. And we have now reached the time when this discipline will show its fruit in a "saved" life;—a life fitted to make its close the starting-point of further progress.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Home at Schweinfurth.

"An obscure town; situated at the extremity of Bavaria, and watered by an unknown river—such, then was to be the asylum of this young woman,"* writes her French biographer. But this is not a correct description of Schweinfurth as it was in the sixteenth century.

Far from being an obscure town, it was a free imperial city, celebrated and important as the greatest corn-market in all central Germany. Far from being situated at the extremity of Bavaria, it was in the midst of the most central district of German civilisation and progress, and the Maine was not in the sixteenth, or, unless on the banks of the Seine, is it in the nineteenth century, by any means an unknown river. Nor were "silence" and "isolation" the doom of Olympia in her home at Schweinfurth. Writing thence soon after her arrival to an Italian friend, she says: "Besides, there are several good men in this place, for whose sake we are glad to be here; and most gladly resign to you your flesh-pots of Egypt;†—*istas ollas Egyptiacas.*"

It may be admitted, however, that the contrast between life at Ferrara and life at Schweinfurth was

* Bonnet, Vie d'Olymp., p. 101.

† Olymp. Carchisio. Letter 29th of the collection.

great, but not altogether to the disadvantage of the latter residence. Freedom of conscience, liberty of life, the interchange of thought and opinion without danger of the Inquisition, and the independence of a home of her own, were well worth the sacrifice of Italian sunshine, brilliant skies, and all the festal out-door life belonging to them. And doubtless Olympia spoke from her heart, when she declared, that she most willingly resigned all share in such "flesh-pots."

The martyrdom of Fannio had dissipated the last hope that Rome might be induced to adopt a more moderate policy towards those who dissented from her doctrine. Soon after this event, and after being settled in her new home, Olympia writes to Celio Curione at Bâle as follows:—

"You invite us to take Bâle on our way, in case we should be returning to Italy. Alas! it is but too probable that we shall never return! Indeed, we did not come into Germany with any hope of soon seeing again my unfortunate country. You must know well all the dangers of a residence in a land where the great enemy of our faith is all powerful. The Pope is now so furiously persecuting our brothers in the faith, and hunting them down so cruelly, that the sufferings of the reformers under the last Pontiff were nothing in comparison to the persecutions of the present one. He has filled all the cities of Italy with his spies, and turns a deaf ear to all applications for mercy. I would far rather seek a refuge at the most distant shore of the far west, than return to a country so afflicted. Should, however, anything cause us to quit my husband's native city, there is no place in the world I should prefer to Bâle. Living near you, I should fancy myself once more among my own people. I should at least be

nearer Italy. I should be able to write more frequently to my mother and sisters, the thought of whom is never absent from my mind night or day. I could also receive news from them more readily."

In another letter of this period from Olympia to the same Italian friend,* to whom she abandoned the flesh-pots, we find a curious indication of the degree to which Caraffa's inquisitors were pushing their system of espionage and minute watchfulness. Sending greetings to a female friend, she cautions her correspondent to whisper them in her ear, lest she or any other friends might get into trouble by the mere mention of her name. Nor was it generally prudent to write any such matter at all. "I send you these letters open on account of the extreme suspiciousness of these days;—propter hæc suspiciosissima tempora." says she in another place.

In a letter to Thomas of Lucca,† however, written about this time, which accompanied some money she desired to remit to her mother—"aliquot nummos aureos,"—she ventures to say of the Interim, that "nobody has as yet been compelled to observe its provisions, but, as before, all live according to their own conscience." So that all the apparatus of men-at-arms, and forcible changes of municipal governments, had effected but little; and the Emperor's attempt to play Pope had issued very much in failure. So difficult is it to bring persecution for conscience sake to bear upon a people, to all whose habits, manners, and instincts, it is repugnant. Charles might issue his decrees; and all those who heard them might receive them with profound obeisance. But still it was the

* Olymp. Carchisio. Letter 32nd. † Letter 31st.

old story, "Water would not quench the fire, fire would not burn the stick, stick would not beat the pig," and Charles could not get his Interim to work.

One of the first letters Olympia wrote from Schweinfurth was to Lavinia della Rovere.* "Your spiritual welfare," she writes to her, "is a subject of my constant prayers; for I fear, lest, after your usual fashion, you suffer your mind to be distracted, and its vigour used up by worldly cares. Despite the various occupations which keep me busy, I have composed the dialogue sent herewith for you, in the hope that the perusal of it may divert your mind from your sorrows.† I suppose that the war with France has separated you from your husband, and that you are in consequence suffering the torment of anxiety. I have therefore introduced into this dialogue some thoughts, which seemed to me suitable to your situation. I send you also some of the writings of Dr. Martin Luther, which have been useful to me, in the hope that you also may find comfort from them."

It must have been by a right trusty and devoted messenger that writings of Luther's could then be sent into Italy. The task of carrying them thither was very far from being either an easy or a safe one. It is satisfactory to observe, however, that Olympia's Calvinism was not so strict as to prevent her from finding profit in the study of the works of Luther; and still more so to note, that from the closeness of her intimacy with Curione, and the high respect she frequently testifies for his authority, she probably shared his opinions on a subject on which they were diametrically opposed to those of the Swiss theologians. In a work entitled "De Ampli-

* Letter 24th of the collection.

† Absence from her husband and continued ill health.

tudine beati regni Dei," Curione ventured to maintain that the number of the elect was greater than that of the reprobate, a heresy of the most painful kind to the Calvinistic mind. "It is a matter of great surprise," says Bayle,* "that he could have dared to advocate such a doctrine in the midst of the Swiss. For it is one extremely objectionable to orthodox members of the Reformed Church; and I do not think that any preacher could maintain it at the present day in Holland with impunity."

Leaving, then, to the pious Dutchmen all the satisfaction derivable from the "orthodox reformed" doctrine, we may reserve to ourselves that of believing, that a pure and noble womanly heart dared to be heretical and human at least thus far.

In another letter, written about this time from Schweinfurth, she noticeably recurs to Luther rather than to Calvin for the means of converting Romanists to Protestantism. It is addressed to Flacius Illyricus, the classical alias of Mathias Flach, who was one of the writers of the centuries of Magdeburg, and author of a vast number of controversial works. Olympia had never seen him; and writes to him merely on the strength of his literary reputation. Having long been anxious, she says, to find the means of providing for her beloved Italy some share of that religious instruction so abundantly possessed by Germany, she had at length determined on applying to him, whose works were well known to her, to undertake the task. "No more would be needed," she writes, "than to translate from German into Italian some one of the writings of Martin Luther, in which the errors of the Roman

* Art. Curion. Note B.

Church are refuted. I would not have shrunk from the labour myself, were it not, that after two years' residence in this country, I am still ignorant of the language. Perhaps, also, you might write some work in Italian on the subject; which, with your profound knowledge of those Scriptures which I have but dipped into, it would be easy to you to do. It would be the means of enlightening many pious men, now living in darkness. Should your zeal for the truth give you courage to undertake such a work, you may rest assured that it would be received on the other side of the Alps with infinite gratitude. But for the success of such a book, it is essential that it should be written in Italian; for only a few of my compatriots read the learned languages."

The dialogue mentioned in the letter to Lavinia della Rovere, cited a few pages back, is one of the few compositions by Olympia which have been preserved.* It is a conversation between Philotima and Theophila, in which the former, who is meant to be Lavinia della Rovere, complains of the sorrows caused her by the continual absence of her husband; "for there is no greater happiness on earth than to live with him we love. But this felicity is refused me; and my sorrow is bitter in proportion to the eagerness with which I had looked forward to happiness."

Thereupon Theophila, who is, of course, Olympia, lectures her friend at considerable length, referring her to "the holy women in the Bible, who sought not in marriage the realisation of their dreams of earthly happiness, but the glory of God;" with several pages more in the usual strain of those writers, whose ethical

* Note 9.

system is based on the assumption, that every natural affection of the heart is in its nature evil. It is curious to recognise in Olympia's nearly irreproachable sixteenth-century Latin, the common stock phrases, similitudes, and metaphors, still in vogue in the Zion meeting-houses and little Bethel chapels. The well-turned sentences read very hollow; and though it is impossible to doubt Olympia's perfect sincerity, or her desire to school her own feelings into the unnatural quietism which she recommends to her friend, yet we cannot forget the very different tone of real feeling and earnestness manifest in those letters written from Ferrara during her own husband's absence, when she talked of pining to death unless he returned within the month! How came the glory of God and the holy women of the Bible to be forgotten, when there was so much need of the consolation to be derived from the meditation of such themes?

Then there are letters indicating that the Scheinfurth dwelling was beginning to take the semblance of a home, with the means and appliances of a scholarly life about it. Thanks to the intervention of good George Hermann, the box of books has arrived from Italy. The dear old books from the little library at Ferrara, where Olympia had passed among them so many, many solitary hours of ambitious girlhood; where Curione had been invited to enjoy "the blessings of solitude and peaceful study;" and in whose safe shelter many a dangerous talk on grace, freewill, and absolute decrees, had been prolonged far into the night! The dear old books, each individual of them bringing with it the well-remembered physiognomy of a familiar friend! In these days of unlimited literary supply, when books are made to be used like oranges, hastily

sucked and chucked away, it is difficult to appreciate fully the reverential love felt by a sixteenth-century scholar for the precious tomes produced with so much labour and difficulty, and acquired at the cost of so much self-denial.

All the books came safely to their far northern home, except Avicenna, which was no where to be found in the box! And Olympia writes to a German friend at Padua,* thanking him for forwarding them, and asking what was due for their carriage. She complains in the same letter, that for fourteen months she has received no tidings from Ferrara, all her letters to her relatives and other friends having remained unanswered. "You have no doubt heard the news of the deliverance and restoration of the Elector of Saxony—(John Frederick, deposed, and long kept prisoner by Charles V.),—it is the great event of the day."

Another indication that the home of Grünthler and Olympia had assumed a certain amount of comfortable stability, as also of the high estimation in which they were held by their friends, may be found in the presence of Theodora, the daughter of John Sinapi, as an inmate of it. The learned physician had begged his former pupil to receive her to be educated together with Olympia's young brother, Emilio. The occupation was one particularly well suited to her. Her whole life, and all her associations, had been scholastic; and if, in the general tenor of her compositions,—putting aside, of course, questions of religious doctrine,—any tone grates possibly a little upon the ear of one who has pictured her to himself as a young, lovely, and fascinating woman, it is an occasional slight echo of

* Letters, 26, 27.

pedagogue-ism, which is just the least bit in the world suggestive of Minerva, with a birch in her hand, and a pair of spectacles on her nose. She was herself childless. In one of her letters to Curione, sending him some of her Greek translations from the Psalms, she begs him to "accept these verses, the only offspring to which I have given birth. And for the present I have no hope of any other."

In one of her letters to Sinapi, she reports favourably of Theodora's progress. "Your daughter," she writes, "every day learns something, and is thus, little by little, putting together her riches."

Look, reader; see, if by putting your eye to the magic glass, you cannot discern the little party framed there in that autumn of the year 1552, in a rather large, but very low, wainscoted room of one of those narrow high-peaked houses, with quaint gables, seeming to be almost endowed with physiognomical expression, that wink and nod at each other across the narrow German street. Doctissimus dominus Andreas is abroad among his patients, of whom he has only too many, much disease being generated, as usual, by the cramming of a number of ill-paid, ill-fed, ill-lodged, and ill-lived soldiers into the narrow quarters of a close-walled town. Olympia and her two pupils are sitting near the small first-floor window which projects over the street, that they may have all the little pale light there is, as the three heads bend together over the small, but well-cut, type of that octavo volume of the Iliad which Luke Anthony Giunta printed at Venice in the year 1537, and which poor Peregrino Morato, being an exile in that city at the time, bought with so much difficulty. The precious volume is not endangered by any easy-chair fashion of holding it in the hand, or letting it lie on the lap, but

reposes statelily on a little wooden desk in front of Olympia's chair, while Theodora and Emilio stand one on each side the youthful matron's knee. The large low chamber, extending over the narrow entrance passage, and two small rooms, one on each side on the ground-floor, occupies the entire extent of the house on the first floor, and has two narrow windows.

At the other of these sits, occupied in some household task, our maid Barbara,—she alone of all the other maids-of-all-work, mending hose, washing windows, or stewing saur-kraut, that day in wide Germany, still extant,—a good servant enough, if "ipsius mores" could be tolerated.* For Barbara's immortality, sad to say, rests mainly like that of some other historical personages, on this questionability of her moral character. Yes! there, clearly enough, sits Barbara at the other window, doing what was to be done under the eye of her mistress, who does not approve of her hand-maiden running out into streets filled with Spanish soldiers, and who finds, as she says at the end of the dialogue she sent to Lavinia della Rovère, that all goes wrong in a house as soon as the mistress's back is turned.

In the back-ground of the large room are two heavy wooden closed bedsteads, looking more like huge chests of drawers than any other modern piece of furniture, in which repose Olympia and her husband.* For this, the best and only good room in the house, is the lady's bower and bedchamber. The two little damp rooms below serve, the one as a kitchen, and the other as the family refectory. Above, in the huge roof, two little narrow-windowed chambers held the pallet beds of Theodora and Emilio; and above these, squeezed into

* Letter, No. 50.

the narrowing roof, another cell, with its eye-like window, peering out under the projecting eaves of the gable, afforded a dormitory for Barbara of the intolerable morals.

Something like this, I fancy, must have been that quiet home, and the way of life in that pine-wood furnished low-roofed chamber, where the daily lessons occupied the morning; and where, in the evening, when the good doctor had returned from his work, some one or two of those "viri boni," for whose sake a residence at Schweinfurth was agreeable,—learned Dominus Johannes Cremer, or learned Magister Andreas Roser, the schoolmaster,—fortis Gyas, fortisque Cloanthus,—grave men in stiff ruffles, large dark-coloured cloaks, and flat wide hats, which they retained as they sat in the somewhat bleak room,—would come in and hold sober discourse in Latin—(Olympia did not understand German)—on the last new controversial work of some shining light, on the probability of the provisions of the Interim being enforced, on the certainty of the doctrine of election, or the uncertainty of the movements of the Emperor, or other such topics; and finish the evening by singing together one of Olympia's Greek Psalms, set to music by her husband; wherein one may fancy that the pure Italian soprano of Olympia, the childish treble of the two children, and the deep voices of the musical German guests, as they joined in the sonorous Greek syllables, under the guidance of Grünthler's bâton, produced a performance altogether *sui generis*. And all is well, if only that slippery ancilla, Barbara, had not taken the opportunity of running out into the street, and left perchance the door on the latch.

A pale life, vulgar cares, and monotonous duties for

our Court-muse, so long accustomed to the flattering homage of a brilliant courtier circle in the splendid Ferrara saloons, glittering with gilding, and glowing with the colours of Dosso Dossi! The contrast must have presented itself sometimes to Olympia's mind; but the recollection was more calculated to produce a contented smile than a sigh of regret. It is a noticeable development of a richly endowed moral nature, —this change of one, who seemed so wholly and perfectly made and fitted for the element in which she then moved, into a being at least as thoroughly adapted to a life so violently contrasted to it in all ways.

Sometimes the perfect adaptation to her new position, as the learned wife of a distinguished professor, not without authority in her circle, shows itself amusingly in a little assumption of the birched Minerva attitude, to which, it has been hinted, she had a slight leaning. As when we find her writing to a divine,* whose name is discreetly left in blank, in this strain:

"As I have good information that your backslidings are frequent, I have thought it right to admonish you that you are acting in a manner at variance with the high dignity of your office, and disgraceful to your gray hairs, in giving way to your appetite as grossly as any Epicurus could do!" The gray-haired preacher, it would seem, was addicted to excessive potations; and Olympia's letter is long and eloquent enough on the subject to have mended his habits, if it was in the power of lecturing to do so.

Grünthler and his wife had hardly got settled at Schweinfurth before a very eligible appointment to a Professor's chair at Lintz was offered to him, through

* Olympia cuidam concionatori Germano. Letter 39.

George Hermann. The position seemed to be all that could be desired, if only a favourably reply were returned to one question, which Olympia immediately writes * back to their kind friend and patron to ask. "Is anti-Christ raging at Lintz? Shall we be permitted, that is to say, to hold and to profess openly our own faith? Because, having been enlightened sufficiently to see and give testimony to the truth, our eternal happiness would be the price of any turning back from the plough."

The answer on this point was unfavourable. All thoughts, therefore, of the Lintz professorship were abandoned: and Grünthler and his wife were contented to remain in their humble home in the free city of Schweinfurth.

But the little family circle there was in the beginning of 1553, broken by the recall of Theodora to the death-bed of her mother. The premature death of Francesca Bucyronia, who had been Olympia's friend at the court of Ferrara, and whose destiny in life had been so singularly the counterpart of her own, was almost as deeply felt in the home at Schweinfurth as in her own at Würzburg. There is a letter from Sinapi to Calvin,† in which he tells him of his loss.

"I had been absent," he writes, "from Würzburg; and my return, and that of Theodora, our beloved daughter (whom we had confided to the care of a matron as pious as she is erudite, Olympia Morata, whose name is no doubt known to you), seemed to restore her" (his wife) "in some degree. But soon all hope was gone * * * Oh! what a faithful and tender friend I have lost in my Francesca. She had joyfully followed

* Letter, 28.

† Corresp. ined. de Calv. cited by Bonnet, p. 121.

me into Germany; and had quickly familiarised herself with the language and manners of this country. She preferred the simple rusticity of my countrymen, to the insincerity and calumny from which she had suffered during the latter part of our residence at Ferrara."

This intimation that Francesca also had suffered from the displeasure of the Court of Ferrara, at the same time that Olympia had fallen into disgrace, would seem to add probability to the supposition, that the same cause, their common Protestantism, was the motive of the Court hostility in either case.

Olympia's French biographer* thinks that this period of her life at Sweinfurth, was "one of sacrifice," and that "isolation and obscurity were now her lot." It does not seem to me that this Schweinfurth home is thus fairly described, or that Olympia so regarded it. I think that it included a fair proportion of the elements of happiness, and that she was perfectly capable of appreciating those elements.

If only the simple home, with its quiet round of congenial duties and congenial pleasures could have been preserved to the physician and his wife, their story might have ended more in the idyllic than the tragic tone. From lyric girlhood to idyllic matronhood the progress is normal, and need excite no pity for its "isolation and obscurity." But the sequel of the tale, which remains to be told, renders it indeed a tragedy.

* Bonnet. Vie d'Olymp. p. 103.

CHAPTER IX.

The makers of history.—The flight from Schweinfurth.

HAPPY times, and prosperous people, it has been said, afford but small materials for history. But great events, which were to shape the history of Europe for centuries to come, were convulsing Germany in those middle years of the sixteenth century. And the amount of misery suffered by the hod-men and day-labourers in this history-building business, was in proportion to the greatness of the work in hand. That "great man" Charles V. was a notable provider of "fine subjects" for history. Poor, gouty, narrow-minded specimen of humanity as he was, rising up early, and late taking rest, at his weary king-craft and history-making, with a very unsound mind in a scarcely sounder body; with "vast views," analogous to those of the sailor, who having expended the first of his fairy-granted wishes on "as much rum as ever he could drink," could only utilise the third of them by asking for "a little more rum;" and with a "large intelligence," equal to the most extended application of the theory of that wise monkey who drew the chesnuts from the fire at the cost of other paws than his own: this "great figure in history" was a scourge to mankind, useful after the fashion of many other such scourges, to admonish men of the folly, meanness, and

absurdity of permitting earth to be harassed by such.

During the winter of 1552, this Charles, suffering much from gout, and greatly troubled in mind about the proceedings of the great Church Council, so necessary for "healing the wounds of Christendom,"—for coupling up the unruly cattle of the great European team, that is to say, so that he, Charles, might have a somewhat less desperately difficult job of it, in driving them,—had taken up his quarters at Innspruck. All paternal care having been well taken for the good government of his German subjects, the Interim duly published, refractory preachers chained up, and good faithful Maurice of Saxony having brought the rebellions Magdeburgers to reason, the mighty Imperial intellect flattered itself that all was safe behind in Germany, and gave itself up to watching the goings on of the bishops down the valley below there at Trent, and endeavouring to persuade them to give such assurance of personal safety to the Protestant divines, as might induce them to trust themselves on the southern side of the Alps. For the smell of the blood of John Huss was strong on the threshold of the council chamber, and the Protestant representatives, driven up again and again to the doorway, could not be got to pass it.

But Germany was not in a loyal mood towards its Imperial master. The princes were discontented at arbitrary infringements of the powers and privileges of the Diet. They were angry at a recent attempt, inspired by the "vast views," to impose upon them as successor to the Imperial dignity that insolent, odious Philip II., who had come from Spain to be presented to the Electors, and, having thoroughly disgusted every one of them, had returned to that more congenial

country. And they were revolted by the Imperial cruelty, faithlessness, and tyranny in the detention of the Landgrave of Hesse in prison; and by the general prospect held out by the Imperial wisdom, that Germany would ere long be as well and orderly governed a country as Spain. Then the burghers were of course discontented enough. It is the nature of such people to be so, as paternal rulers are too well aware.

In this state of things, Maurice of Saxony, whom the Emperor had made Elector, when he deposed the unfortunate John Frederick, began to show his real colour. That good faithful Maurice, of whose attached fidelity to his fortunes, Charles in his Imperial sagacity, and the profound political insight of the Imperial ministers had not the slightest doubt,—crafty, able, Maurice thought that the time was now come for throwing off a mask long carefully worn, and striking a blow for himself and for Germany, that should effectually clip the "vast views" and dangerous talons of the Imperial eagle.

So he suddenly drew together and put in motion the forces long prepared, and kept a-foot on various skilfully devised pretexts, rendered specious by an abundance of "able" falsehoods, and made a dash at the wholly unprepared Imperial eagle at Innspruck, which all but caught him in his nest.

Charles had to escape as best he might across the snows in dreadful weather, with gnashing of teeth, gout in his legs, and et tu Brute! in his heart, to remote Villach among the Alps; where, with a foretaste of the later St. Just mood of thought on life and king-craft, he had to wait in very un-Imperial sort, till some accommodation could be come to with his numerous enemies.

This was effected on the 2nd of August 1552, at Passau, by a treaty of peace, which recognised, and in some degree secured the Germanic liberties, destroyed the life's labour of that mighty Imperial intelligence, and thenceforth limited very considerably the horizon of those Imperial vast views.

But, "quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi." For monarch's madness, subjects pay the smart. The law is inexorable. Despite treaties of peace, with whatsoever oaths, parchments, and seals of the Empire, the amount of misery due by normal action of cause and effect for the "vast views," which Charles had passed his life in endeavouring to carry out, had to be paid. And that particular little fraction of suffering, with which the present story is concerned, was assessed and levied in manner following.

Among the various allies whom able Maurice of Saxony had induced to join him against the Emperor, was one Albert of Brandenburg, who, having been Grand Master of the Teutonic Order of Knights, then the rulers of a considerable portion of the country now called Prussia, was so deeply moved by the doctrines of Luther, that for conscience sake he was obliged to play false to his brother knights, and seize on their territory as an independent state for himself. Now this Albert, being at the head of a powerful force of mercenary soldiers, veterans ready for anything,—except honest callings and peaceful labour,—and being as M. Bonnet writes,* "one of those brilliant types of the medieval soldier of fortune, brave, adroit, indefatigable, given to plunder, cruel, faithless, and lawless," was by no means willing, when his chief Maurice made

* Vie d'Olymp. p. 130.

peace at Passau, to allow all his *brilliance* to be rusted for want of action. Peace to him was like a hard frost to a fox-hunter. Besides his Protestant feelings were very strongly stimulated by the contemplation of the rich and very defenceless territories of those malignant Papists, the Bishops of Bamberg and Würzburg.

So he refused to join in, or be bound by the treaty of Passau, and determined to carry on the war on his own account. Which he did after so brilliantly Ishmaelitish a fashion, that a cry of mad dog was raised, and he was put to the ban of the Empire. Being thus driven from harrying the countries of the two prince-bishops, and obliged to look round for some shelter from his pursuers, he dashed at neighbouring Schweinfurth, seized it as a stronghold for himself and his troops; and was there besieged by the bishops, in conjunction with the Nürembergers and the Duke of Brunswick.

Which interrupted very disagreeably the morning Homer readings and the evening Greek psalm-singing in the quiet little home we were just now peeping into.

Deliration of princes indeed! Better, if fighting must needs be, to have a quarrel of your own to fight for, like the bold Magdeburgers, with Interim at their gates! But these hapless Schweinfurth citizens had their city turned to the uses of a badger-baiting tub for neither fault, quarrel, nor interest of their own. Let the upshot of the struggle be as it might, they had only ruin and destruction to fear from it. And this siege lasted for fourteen months! "For fourteen whole months did we live in the greatest possible straits, while the city was besieged;" writes Olympia to her sister. "If I were to attempt to recount to you all we went through, I should send you, not a letter, but a

large volume. By day and by night we were in the midst of the missiles of the besiegers." The lawlessness of the troops within the town was a dreadful addition to their calamities. The homes of the citizens were constantly liable to predatory visits from bands of soldiers, whose "bravery, adroitness, cruelty, thievishness, and faithlessness" were quite as "brilliant" as their master's.

In the ordinary and fitting course of things, pestilence soon made its appearance in a city thus circumstanced; and, together, with an excessive scarcity of food; completed the misery of its inhabitants. It now became Grünthler's duty to be found in the van of the struggle, and in the hottest of the danger. And as usual in the annals of a profession, which has, more rarely, probably, than has been the case in any other department of human effort, been found wanting in the high estimate and full discharge of its duties in times of danger and difficulty, the physician was early and late at his post, struggling hand to hand with *his* enemy. But the fight had to be carried on under great disadvantages. All the stock of medicines in the town was exhausted. And drugs formed a larger portion of the means and appliances at the command of the skilled physician in those days, than is now the case. The sickness spread with fearful rapidity. "By contagion among the soldiers," writes Olympia,* "who are excessively crowded in the city, so malignant a form of disease has attacked almost the entire population, that nearly one half of the people have perished, terror and mental distress contributing no small part to the result."

Before long Grünthler was struck down in the midst

* Letter 37.

of his labours. Help there was none. Every man was too much engrossed by his own desperate fight with the misery around him. Medicine there was none, food but little. And Olympia watched alone and helpless by the bedside of her husband; sustained only by the belief that her fervent and unceasing prayers might move Heaven to that miraculous interference with the unseen working of the material laws, which even then mankind had ceased to expect in cases where their operation is seen and comprehended. Even Olympia, whose love for her husband poured itself forth in such earnest supplications, that the fever in his blood might not produce the effect upon his organism, which in other men it did produce,—Olympia herself would not have prayed, that water closing over his head should fail to drown him.

Not the less did her belief sustain her in those long hours of dreadful desolation and sickening dread. She was comforted;—though at the cost of a lower ideal of the nature of the Creator than she would have attained had such comfort been impossible to her; and, therefore, at the cost of a proportionate inferiority in her own moral nature.

But the physician's malady was not "unto death." He recovered. As M. Bonnet writes;* "It required a miracle to save Grünthler. . . Olympia's prayers and those of the Church of Schweinfurth were heard; and Grünthler was saved!"

Amid the horrors of this time Olympia found means to send out of the city a letter† to Lavinia della Rovère.

"What a good fortune is it," she writes, "in our

* Vie d'Olymp. p. 133. † Letter 37.

misery to have found an opportunity of telling you of our sorrows. Weep for us, my friend; but at the same time be thankful for our mercies. We are besieged in this town, and shut in without escape, between two great armies. But God has so kept us hitherto, that we have escaped from what seemed certain death. He has fed us, and continues to feed us, in a time of extreme scarcity. My husband, prostrated by disease, was on the brink of the grave. But He hath deigned to recall him to life in mercy to me, who could not have supported so heavy a blow. . . . In all these afflictions we have had but one consolation, prayer and meditation on the Holy Scriptures. Not once have I turned to look back with regret on the riches of Egypt. And I have felt that to meet death here, is preferable to the enjoyment of all the pleasures of the world elsewhere." "Egypt," and "elsewhere" of course mean Ferrara, with the necessity of concealing her religious faith. She concludes this letter, written amid so great misery, with a burst of affection, which shows how deeply the friendship of her early years had rooted itself in her heart, and how profoundly she had felt the kindness shown to her in her old time of distress.

"Once more, farewell! my own sweetest Lavinia, who livest ever in my heart's core,—quæ mihi semper hæres in medullis,—and whom I can never forget while life remains,—dum spiritus hos reget artus. Adieu! Adieu! and may you live in happiness!"

As the besieging forces, irritated at the length of time the Margrave had succeeded in holding the town against them, redoubled their efforts, the condition of those within the city became continually worse and worse. The houses no longer afforded the inhabitants shelter from the fire of the enemy. "During the

whole of that period," writes Olympia to Curione,* of the latter part of the siege, "we were obliged to lie concealed in a cellar."

At length, Albert's means of resistance were exhausted; and that "brilliant" specimen of chivalry evacuated the town at the head of his soldiery, with the intention of cutting his way through the besieging forces. Great was the joy in Schweinfurth at his departure; but it was of very short duration. For while one portion of the allied troops pursued the flying Margrave, the forces of Nüremberg, and of the two Bishops, entered the town the next day, determined to treat it as a place taken by assault. They were all good Catholics, and the Schweinfurth people were almost all Protestants, unarmed, worn out by the long miseries of the siege, and much more than decimated by the pestilence.

It was a good opportunity for indulging in every evil passion, under the cloak of religious zeal. And Schweinfurth suffered all the horrors of a sack, inflicted in cold blood by fellow-countrymen, the citizens of neighbouring towns, divided from their victims only by some speculative differences of creed!

Olympia has recorded some of the incidents of that dreadful day in the letter to her sister, that has been already quoted. The soldiers, rushing into the town in complete disorder, set fire to the houses in many places. "In that moment of trepidation and panic terror," she writes, "my husband and I were rushing to the church as the safest asylum, when a soldier, altogether unknown to us, addressed us, and warned us to fly from the city if we would not be buried

* Letter 58.

beneath its ruins. Had we remained in the church, we should have been suffocated by the smoke, as many were. We followed the man's advice, and made for the gate accordingly." But before they could reach it, the letter goes on to say, they fell into the hands of a party of soldiers, who stripped them of every thing, and took Grüntlfler prisoner. Escaping from their hands, he was a second time seized before they could reach the gate.* "Then, I can tell you, I knew what agony of mind is, if ever I knew it; then I prayed with ardour, if ever I did so. In my sore distress I cried aloud, 'Help me! Help me, Oh Lord, for Ghrist his sake!' nor did I cease my cry until He helped me, and set my husband free. I would that you could have seen in what a condition I was, covered with fluttering rags, for my clothes had been torn from off my back. In my flight I lost both shoes and stockings, and had to run barefoot over rough stones and rocks, so that in truth I know not how I won through. Again and again I said, 'Here I must fall and die, for I can endure no more.' Then I cried to God, 'Lord, if thou wilt, that I live, command thy angels that they carry me, for carry myself I cannot!'".

At length they reached the gate, and escaped from the horrors of the town. "And having my husband with me," says the letter to her sister, "I minded not the loss of all else, though I had only my shift—subucula—left to cover me."

In that plight, the fugitives had to travel ten miles that dreadful night, till they reached the village of Hammelburg. Olympia had been suffering the whole time from tertian fever, and was absolutely unable

* Olympia a Madonna Cherubina. Letter 86. The only one of the collection written in Italian.

to proceed further. "Among the poorest of the poor," she writes to Curione, "I might have been taken for the queen of the beggars." At Hammelburg they met with scant hospitality. The people were afraid of giving offence to their prince-bishop by harbouring fugitives from Protestant Schweinfurth. Nevertheless, in the absolute impossibility of dragging herself out of the town, Olympia and her companions were allowed to remain there three days. On the fourth, though still very ill, and hardly able to walk with the support of her husband, the miserable wanderers were obliged again to take the road. But they were still in an enemy's country, and surrounded by danger. At the next town they reached, they were arrested and thrown into prison for several days, while the authorities of the place applied to their superiors for directions what was to be done with them. A general order had been given to put to death all fugitives from Schweinfurth; and these days were spent accordingly, as Olympia says in the letter already quoted, in an agony of hope and fear. They were at length released, and met with assistance of some charitable individuals, especially of one who, without allowing them to know his name, gave them fifteen golden crowns, which enabled them to reach the residence of the Count de Reineck on the Saal. There they were kindly received, and assisted to continue their journey to Erbach, in the Odenwald.

The Counts of this picturesque little mountain town were at that time three brothers, who lived together in the castle, which may yet be seen there; and the eldest of whom had married the sister of the Count Palatine, Frederick II., the principal builder of the magnificent

pile, still the boast and ornament of Heidelberg. They were zealous Protestants, who had more than once risked life and fortune in the cause, and enjoyed a very high reputation for their piety among their co-religionists, and even among their opponents, for their virtues and uprightness.

By these excellent men, and by the Countess, the wanderers were received with open arms, and 'comcomforted in every way that their miserable condition required. Olympia was not unknown to them by reputation; and the tale of sorrows she had now to tell, was not needed to make her a welcome guest at Erbach. She reached the hospitable roof utterly prostrated and broken down, almost literally naked, and having lost all that she and her husband possessed in the world. Worst and most irreparable loss of all, her books, those much-loved books, which had been the companions of her life, and with them a great quantity of her manuscripts, had perished in the burning of Schweinfurth.

It needed all the motherly care and kindness of the good Countess of Erbach, who insisted on ministering to her as she lay on a bed of sickness for several days, with her own hands, to restore her to some degree of convalescence.* Indeed, the shock which her system had received from the sufferings and fatigue of that awful night during the escape from the city, and the ten miles of weary wayfaring which followed it, was ultimately, though not immediately, fatal to her. She never recovered from the effects of it, though the repose and kind cares of which she was the object in the castle of Erbach, apparently restored her to some degree of health for the present.

* Olympia's letter to her sister

Olympia and her husband and little brother seem to have remained some considerable time with these kind and noble hosts. She had an opportunity of observing the ordinary habits of their daily life, and has left us an interesting little sketch of the patriarchal manners prevailing in the pious household of a German country nobleman of that day.*

"The Count," she writes, "maintains sundry preachers in the town, and is always the first to be present at their sermons. Every day before breakfast, he gathers around him the members of his family and his servants, and reads to them a portion of one of St. Paul's Epistles. Then he kneels in prayer, together with his whole household. His next care is to visit his subjects, one by one, in their homes, when he talks familiarly with them and exhorts them to piety. For he says, that he is responsible before God for their souls. Would that all princes and lords resembled him!"

Of the Countess she writes to her sister, that "she is a woman religious before all else. Her conversation is ever of God and of the life hereafter, of which she speaks with the greatest enthusiasm and desire."

Grünthler's friends were meanwhile endeavouring to find some independent position for him. There is a letter from one Hubert of Heidelberg to him, among the collection of Olympia's letters,† in which he tells him, that all the councillors of the Palatine's court being then at Worms, "seeking means to avert, if possible, the calamities that menace Germany," he has no immediate hope of being able to obtain for him a

* Letter to Donna Cherubina, already quoted.
† Letter 40.

chair in the University of Heidelberg. "But be assured," he continues, "that my house is open to you and to your family. Come to me without hesitation; and be sure that better days are in store for you;—'Grata superveniet, quæ non sperabitur, hora.'"

But very soon after receiving this kind, though unsatisfactory letter, Grünthler learned from the Count of Erbach, that he had obtained for him the Professorship of Medicine at Heidelberg from his brother-in-law the Elector. Thus, once more there was an assured life and sphere of duty before them; and taking leave of their benefactors and the quiet mountain home which had refitted them after the storm, they started pilgrim-wise across the Odenwald, with full hearts and renewed hopes towards their new home.

CHAPTER X.

A new home in Heidelberg;—and a last home beneath it.—What is Olympia Morata to us?

The distance to be traversed by the little family in their journey from Erbach to Heidelberg, is about ten leagues, through a country of wooded hills, then crossed by no roads except the bridle-paths that led from village to village. They were accompanied by guides provided by their noble hosts at Erbach, and made the little journey by easy stages. Their more pressing necessities had been relieved by the generosity of the same kind friends. Olympia especially records having received as a present from the Countess a dress worth a thousand crowns.* Moreover, it was in summer—the summer of 1554—fresh hopes were before them; and the journey was probably not a sad one.

A letter from Grünthler's friend Andreas Campanus,† schoolmaster at Mossbach, written to Curione at Bâle, after Olympia's death, records a pleasing little incident of this journey: The travellers had reached the little town of Hirschhorn, in the valley of the Neckar, where they were to pass the night. And there, in the common room of the inn, were the schoolmaster of the place,

* "Quin, et pallam egregiam donavit, plus quam mille sestertium nummorum æstimatam."—Letter of her sister.

† Letter, 74. of the collection of Olympia's letters.

one Dominus Georgius Treuthuger, and his scholars, practising part-singing in German fashion. The "ludimagister" and his boys made, as it would seem, but a lame business of it. Whereupon Olympia, coming forward, helped them out of the difficulty, singing the notes with them, and encouraging them. Ludimagister Treuthuger was delighted, as he might well be, at so charming a "Deus ex machinâ;" and, entering into conversation with the strangers — in Latin, of course — passed most of the evening in learned discourse before discovering who the travellers were. On learning their names, he rushed off to his house, and returned with several pieces of Andreas Grünthler's music, which had, he said, long been favourites of his; "which infinitely delighted and surprised the Doctor and Olympia;"* the surprise, it must be supposed, being occasioned by the fact that Grünthler's music should have found its way to the obscure little town in the Neckar valley. "I have often heard him," says Campanus, "telling his scholars never to forget the lady who sang with them so beautifully, and that at sight, too."

On the following day they reached Heidelberg safely, and Grünthler at once entered on the duties of his office.

Hubert Thomas, who was secretary to the Elector Palatine, and a friend, as we have seen, of Grünthler and his wife, has written† that a professor's chair of the Greek language was offered to Olympia by the Elector, at the same time that he appointed her hus-

* "Id quod doctorem etiam et Olympiam in summam admirationem adduxit."

† Annales de Vitâ et Rebus gestis Federici II., Electoris Palatini lib. xiv. Ann. 1554, quoted by Bonnet.

band to one of medicine. He speaks of "Doctor Andreas Grünthler, whose wife Olympia, to describe her justly, should be called Sappho of Lesbos;" and goes on to say, that "Both of them were invited by our prince to be the ornaments of his University; he to be professor of medicine, she to teach the Greek language, which she hath hitherto deferred doing, on account of ill health." M. Bonnet thinks, that this offer of a Greek professorship must be deemed a mistake and rejected as incredible, because Olympia does not speak of it in her letters to the brothers Sinapi and Curione. These letters contain, he argues, even the smallest details of her life, and would not therefore have omitted a circumstance of such importance. But these letters, though containing many a little incident which happened to be in the mind of the writer at the moment, do not in any wise purport to give a journal, or even a general view of the history of her life. And even if they were of this nature, it appears to me far more easy to imagine reasons why Olympia may never have mentioned this offer, than to suppose that the Elector's secretary, writing annals at the time the events were passing,—(for the word "hactenus" in the passage quoted, "quod hactenus distulit (Olympia) morbo comprehensa," joined to the date of her death, show that the passage must have been written within a year, at least, of the circumstances recorded) could either have been mistaken, or have written wilfully what was false. Olympia knew but too well that she would never be able to avail herself of such a proposal. Her health and strength had been too much shattered. Probably enough, her reminiscences of public lecturing, and the applause of large auditories, may have made the idea of again presenting herself to such an ordeal altogether

distasteful to her present tone of mind and feeling, even had her health permitted her to hope that she might ever again be physically able to do so. And she may have felt, that to give the physical reason for refusing to her kind friends, was to sadden them needlessly by dwelling on a subject which, in all her letters, she touches as lightly as possible; while to assign such a moral reason as has been suggested, would probably give rise to troublesome remonstrances and persuasions. Besides, we have no apparent means of knowing that she did not mention this circumstance to some one, or to all of these friends. Curione's title-page to her works expressly tells us that we have in that volume the writings of Olympia, "quæ hactenus inveniri potuerunt." Many of her letters may have been, and in all probability were, lost. To set aside, therefore, the direct assertion of a perfectly competent and perfectly trustworthy authority, on no other ground than the silence, on the subject, of these letters, seems altogether unreasonable and contrary to every principle of historical investigation.

There is, then, I think, no reason to discredit the assertion of Hubert Thomas, that a chair in Greek, which she was so eminently well qualified to occupy, was offered to Olympia by the Elector, who, finding that this celebrated and highly gifted Italian woman was to be his subject, and a resident in his capital, probably thought that he could in no manner contribute more to the renown and attractions of his University, than by imitating a step for which Italy, the great authority on matters of learning and literature, had already furnished more than one precedent.

In a letter from Olympia to her sister, written immediately after their arrival at Heidelberg, on the silence

of which as to the Greek professorship M. Bonnet, who erroneously supposes it to be written to Curione, specially rests his disbelief of any such proposal having been made, she thus announces to her correspondent their new prospects.

"My husband," she writes, "has beeen called to Heidelberg, where we now are, by the most illustrious Prince Palatine, Elector of the Empire, to teach medicine in the public schools; although in this time of calamitous and turbulent tempest, arms are more in request than science."

Yet, had it not been for the consequences of the sufferings endured that fatal night of the flight from Schweinfurth, the aspects of the life now before them might have seemed brighter than any that had hitherto been their lot. Heidelberg was at that time, perhaps the most flourishing and important centre of intellectual movement and learning in Germany. Its University held the highest rank, and its professors numbered among them several of the most distinguished names of Transalpine Europe. A professional chair among such colleagues was no mean promotion.

Next to health, the most irreparable loss in the Schweinfurth catastrophe was that of the library. And we find their friends exerting themselves to repair, as far as possible, this disaster. By a singular chance, one volume, the Lives of Plutarch, belonging to their former library, was recovered to form the nucleus of a new collection. It had been found among the ruins at Schweinfurth, with the name of Olympia written on the last page; and John Sinapi had the pleasure of sending it to her with a letter of consolations and exhortations to fortitude under the calamities to which they had been exposed.

"Leave groaning," he says, "to those who have no hope save in this world. Your treasure is in heaven, where thieves cannot steal it, nor flames destroy it. Do you not, like the sage of old, carry all your goods with you,—your learning, your piety, your honour, your virtue, and your attainments? What are material misfortunes and ruin to such an one? 'Si fractus illabatur orbis, Impavidum ferient ruinæ.'"

Curione, from Bâle, writes; "I send you, my dear Olympia, the Homer you ask for, together with some publications of my own. The book of the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah you will receive from Frankfurt; and you will all the more profitably study it, in the time of your mourning for your husband's native city. It is for you now to return to the studies which have been interrupted, to produce something worthy of Sophocles, and to obtain the laurel which has so long been your due."

All such brave talk must have been received by Olympia with a sad smile. For she felt surely enough, that her laurel-seeking days were over, and knew well that the night, "when no man can work", was coming very quickly. And, indeed, one can hardly help smiling now at honest Curione's expectation that "something worthy of Sophocles" should be generated by meditations on the Lamentations of Jeremiah!

But the misfortunes which had fallen on the learned physician and his celebrated wife at Schweinfurth, had attracted, it would seem, such attention, that others besides their own private friends were anxious to contribute towards replacing what had been lost. For we find Olympia charging Curione with her thanks to the eminent publishers, Oporinus, Hervagius, and Frobenius, for the valuable presents of books they had sent

her. The incident is a pleasing trait of the feeling existing among the members of the guild of learning in those old German days, despite the volleys of sesquipedalian billingsgate, more or less ciceronian, with which they assailed each other on most occasions. And it is a proof of the high estimation in which Olympia was held, and of the extended reputation her name had attained.

Yet it was an uphill task, this recomposing a home in a strange city; and Olympia, weak and suffering as she was, had to busy herself with far other cares and labours than such as had rivalling Sophocles for their object.

One of her earliest letters from Heidelberg was to her old master John Sinapi. "My husband," she writes, "is preparing for his public lectures. I have been excessively busy all day in buying household gear, that we may be able to get into our new house." Emilio too was fully occupied "in domesticis negotiis," assisting his sister in her preparations for recommencing housekeeping, or he would write to his friend Theodora.

Then, from this and other letters of the same time, we find her much troubled on the subject of serving-maids. Ladies suffering from the same vexations in the nineteenth century, may extend their sympathy across the chasm of three hundred years, from poor dear Mrs. Blank in the next street, to poor dear Mrs. Grünthler in her home at Heidelberg. They may, perhaps, find materials for consolation in their torments, from the discovery, that "the pitch to which things have come now-a-days," had been arrived at three centuries ago, by this monotonously trundling world.

"The weakness of my health," she writes to John

Sinapi, "has within the last few days compelled me to engage the only woman I have been able to meet with. She asks a golden florin a month, reserving too the right to employ a portion of her time for her own profit. Under the pressure of necessity I have been obliged to submit. But all the wealth of Persia should not induce me to keep her any longer. I throw myself, therefore, on your charity for assistance. Do try, if you can send me a servant of some sort, young or old. I can give her five florins a year."

She had written to our friend Cremer at Schweinfurth to send her a cook, thinking, that many women might be found anxious to obtain some shelter among those unfortunates who had been made destitute and homeless by the destruction of that city;—"ex miseris illis pauperculis et vagis Suinfordiensibus." But another friend, only designated by the initial N.,* writes from that misery-stricken place, to say, that he finds it wholly impossible to send her either an old woman, or a girl,—"anum aut ancillam." All at Schweinfurth are either dead or dying. "The mother of your former maid Kungunga would come, but is laid up with fever. Possibly she may come, should she recover."

We find our old acquaintance Barbara come to the surface again, after the cataclysm which had submerged so much that was more valuable. Barbara was willing to return to her old mistress; but then those intolerable "mores" do not seem to have been mended by all that had come and gone since the quiet Schweinfurth days. And this proposal, even in Olympia's pressing need, seems to have been rejected. Though, as she writes to Andreas Campanus, the schoolmaster

* Letter 50.

at Mossbach, she would rather be her own maid, than put up with any such as were to be found at Heidelberg.

Are there no ladies recently come from their virtuous shires to establish a home in the great Babylon, who can sympathise with her? Heidelberg was the seat of a brilliant court, and a large university. And, doubtless, the abigails partook of the vices and corruptions incidental to both these phases of social life. The good "ludimagister" of Mossbach would have sent Olympia his own maid under escort of the postman, "cum tabellario," but that she too was down with sickness, as indeed were also all the family of poor Andreas.

So difficult a matter was it to come by an eligible maid-of-all-work in the year 1554! These domestic perplexities will, no doubt, be to readers of her own sex, the one touch of nature that makes all the world akin. But it may seem strange to them that Mrs. Grünthler ("Domina Grünthlera," as friend N. at Schweinfurth, writing on these household matters, alone of all her other correspondents, addresses her) did not communicate with other mistresses of families on such matters, instead of always with the gentlemen. It must be remembered, however, that Olympia understood no German, and the ladies around her no Latin. Unlike her friend Francisca, John Sinapi's Italian wife, she had never thought it worth her while to acquire the language of her adopted country; betraying, one might fancy, thereby, some little pedantic affectation of classicality, the lees of the old Grecian-virgin nature. The result was, that when she wanted to speak of the price of a gown, she had to talk unintelligible stuff about "sestercium nummorum;" and

when she wanted a maid, could only seek assistance from bearded doctors as classical as herself.

Still, let any reader of an un-hero-worshipping turn of mind take notice, that our Olympia is no subject for quizzing of his, on the score of any such little eccentricity of the spectacled Minerva kind. A passage in the letter of N. of Schweinfurth proves,* that the difficulties of her ciceronian idiom did not prevent her from visiting, and with her small means comforting the misery in the poorhouse at Schweinfurth, during those fearful days, when every man's thought was for himself; though she *did* call the place a "Zenodochia." And when the "res angusta domi" was pressing her so hard, that Grünthler had to borrow money to meet the expenses of their first establishment at Heidelberg, she still found means to think of the poor she had left in miserable Schweinfurth. "If there is anyone in your neighbourhood," writes poor Grünthler to his friend the schoolmaster at Mossbach, "who could lend me twenty golden florins, I would send him a gold chain as a security, and would name a day for the repayment of the loan." Yet it is about the same time that "N." writes to say, that the poor she used to care for, had been all dispersed at the time of the sack and burning of the city, and it was impossible to know what had become of them. But he promises that the money sent shall be distributed in charity according to her wish.

Yet despite small means, past losses, and domestic troubles, a happy career of usefulness and honour might still have been before Grünthler and his highly gifted wife, if only the latter had retained sufficient

Letter 50.

vital force to have rallied from the Schweinfurth miseries. But the physician had the infinite pain of seeing her fade and perish daily, amid the manifold manifestations of the high place she occupied in the esteem and regard of her contemporaries.

The Elector, failing in his wish that she should reflect a lustre on his University by occupying one of its chairs, had wished to attach her to his court, as lady of honour to the Electress. But Olympia had had enough of courts! In a letter written in the year 1554 to her old friend and playmate Anne of Este, then Duchess of Guise, after regretting their total and inevitable separation, and wishing that she could be near her, she adds; "Not that I would again pass my life in a court; for I might have done so here had I wished it."

The same feeling is expressed in a letter to John Sinapi, written during the first days of her residence at Heidelberg. He had proposed again confiding his daughter Theodora to her care. Her presence will be in every respect agreeable, Olympia replies. Send her at once, but not with any idea of her frequenting the court; "for I purpose spending my days far from courts." But she will do all she can for her; will take her sometimes to the Countess of Erbach, where she may become acquainted with the three charming daughters of that excellent woman. She must bring her bed with her, "'for we are unable at present to buy more beds, and they are extremely dear here." . . . "Salute from me all your family, and the licentiate Faius, *if he has ceased to be a monk.*"

In another letter to Chilian Sinapi, written about the same time, she regrets her inability to give assistance to some persons whom he had recommended to

her. She had already charged herself with the keep of some utterly destitute poor; would fain do so for all the ruined unfortunates of Schweinfurth, were it possible. Poor Andreas Rosarius, the schoolmaster, had written to her too to say, that he was in great distress, and asked her whether there would be any chance of his finding any lessons in Heidelberg. But Olympia could give him no encouragement. There was no opening for a teacher in Heidelberg. It would seem that "professions were too full" in the world before the nineteenth century, as well as servants troublesome.

These letters, from which a stray fragment of biographical interest has been gathered here and there, are mainly filled with fervent religious exhortations, conceived in a spirit that can leave no doubt of the heartfelt sincerity of the writer. They are for the most part free from any advocacy of the more revolting doctrines of Calvinism, and insist chiefly on the vanity of earthly interests, hopes, and pleasures, and the necessity of God's free grace, to enable us to choose the better path. Those especially to her sister, to Lavinia della Rovere, and to Anna d'Este, are long, urgent, and affectionate exhortations to hold all things nought for Christ's sake. They may be found at length, translated into French, in M. Bonnet's work. But it has seemed to me unnecessary to occupy the present pages with any specimen of these writings, inasmuch as any page of them, divested of the names of persons and places, which mark their authorship, would be absolutely undistinguishable from many millions of pages which have been, and are still being, written and printed on the same subjects. It may be remarked, however, that the manner is more

that of the evangelical writers of the nineteenth than of the seventeenth century. It is wholly undisfigured by the undue familiarity, low imagery, and grotesque phraseology, which often marked the efforts of writers determined at any cost to rouse, at least, the attention of their readers, if they could not carry with them their intelligence.

As her health declined rapidly, she felt, and frequently expressed, that desire to quit this world and its toils, and to be at rest with God, which is deemed by religionists of the kind called evangelical, to be the most sure and satisfactory indication of a healthy and desirable condition of soul. Thinkers of a different class see only a proof of failing bodily powers in those manifestations, which, to the former, are assurances of increasing spiritual vigour. They find it quite in accordance with all the recognisable operations of the Creator, that in well-regulated minds the desire to live should become weakened, together with the physical incapacity for life; but wholly out of all analogy with His government of the world, that man's highest spiritual excellence should coincide with, or even be compatible with, a diseased condition of the machine, by means of which the spirit has to act and develop itself; and still more, if possible, inconsistent with the ways of God to man, that man's highest state of efficiency for duty should be specially marked by his desire to leave the scene of it.

Olympia's willingness to die, normally and mercifully (a tautological expression!) accompanied the increasing certainty that she could not live. It is true, that the world around her, in all that most nearly touched her affections, hopes, and fears, was becoming from day to day more cheerless and distasteful to her.

The prospects of the Reformers were every where becoming more and more gloomy. Already internal schism was vexing Rome's schismatics!

"I am not ignorant," * writes Olympia to Vergerius, "that a great controversy about the sacrament has arisen among the reformed. But this would easily have been put an end to before this, if men would think less of their own glory, and more of that of Christ, and the safety of his Church." Pope Paul IV. would have re-echoed the sentiment with most entire approbation!

Then, again, tidings of increasing persecution were coming in from all parts. In England, Mary had succeeded to the throne. And Olympia hears that Bernardino Ochino, of Siena, has been obliged to fly thence, and take refuge at Geneva. From France the news was even worse and worse. From Italy it was to Olympia the worst of all.

"My last letters from Italy," she writes to Chilian Sinapi,† "bring me the sad news that the Christians at Ferrara—(this is not the only passage of Olympia's writings in which she, by implication, denies that the Romanists are Christians)—are suffering from the most cruel persecution. The great and the little are equally exposed to suffering for conscience' sake. Some are loaded with chains. Some are condemned to exile. A remnant find their safety in flight. My mother has continued firm amid the storm. All honour be to God therefor. I entreat her to come out from that Babylon with my sisters, and to join me in this country."

To complete the gloom of the material horizon

* Letter 56. † Letter 46.

around her, pestilence broke out in Heidelberg in the early summer of 1555. And once again it became the physician's duty to be found in the van of the battle against it. Yet it was hard to be called on to leave the bedside of his now evidently dying wife, at every daily and nightly call. But he was strengthened in the path of his duty by the exhortations of Olympia.

Bad news also came from Curione. Both he and his daughter were struck down by illness. He recovered shortly, however; and it would be strange, if the inconsistency were not generic rather than peculiar to Olympia, to observe, that she, who welcomed death as a spiritual blessing to herself, and deemed her so welcoming it to be a mark of spiritual grace, "wept with joy at hearing that her friend had been snatched from the tomb."

In the same letter* she writes: "As for me, my dear Celio, I must tell you that it is hardly probable that I should survive much longer. Medical treatment can do nothing for me. Each day and hour my friends see me perishing from before them. This letter is in all likelihood the last you will ever receive from me. My body and my strength are worn out. I have no appetite; and I am constantly, night and day, threatened with suffocation by my cough. A burning fever consumes me; and pain in every part of my body takes away the possibility of sleep. There is nothing further for me but to breathe my last sigh. But up to that last sigh I shall not forget those whom I have loved. Do not let the news of my death afflict you. I know that the reward of the just is reserved for me; and I long to quit this life to be with Jesus Christ."

* Letter 68.

A letter from Grünthler * to Curione, gives a detailed account of her last hours.

"A short time before her end," he writes, "she waked from a short sleep, and smiled, as if moved by some pleasing thought. Hanging over her, I asked the cause of this sweet expression. 'I saw in my dream,' she said, 'a place illumined with the most brilliant and pure light.'—(She had lucidity and clear honesty enough to distinguish between 'dream' and 'vision.')—Her extreme weakness did not permit her to say more. I said 'Courage, my best beloved! Very soon you will be living amid that pure light.' She smiled again, and made a slight sign of assent. A little afterwards, she said, 'I am happy, perfectly happy;' and ceased speaking, just as her sight began to fail. 'I can scarcely see you, my loved ones,' she said; 'but all round me there seem to be beautiful flowers.' Those were her last words. An instant afterwards she seemed to fall asleep, and breathed her last."

She died, the same letter tells us, at four in the afternoon of the 26th of October, 1555; having not completed her twenty-ninth year.

Grünthler felt his loss to be the loss of all that made life desirable to him. But he had not to endure it long. The pestilence continued to decimate Heidelberg. The University was deserted; and the town was half emptied by death and by the flight of all who could escape. But the bereaved physician had no motive to shun the pestilence, even if his duty had not been to remain in the midst of it. He continued some two months at his post after the death of his wife, was

* Letter 69.

then struck down by the sickness, and so followed her.

The boy Emilio, now in his thirteenth year, thus left alone in the plague-stricken city, must in all probability have taken the infection from his brother-in-law; for he also died within a few days.

All three were buried in a chapel of the Church of St. Peter at Heidelberg, at the expense of a French professor in the University, one Guillaume Rascalon; where the following inscription, recently restored, M. Bonnet says, may yet be read:—

"Deo Inmortali Sacrum et virtuti ac memoriæ Olympiæ Moratæ, Fulvii Morati Mantuani viri doctissimi, filiæ, Andreæ Grünthleri medici conjugis; lectissimæ feminæ, cujus ingenium ac singularis utriusque linguæ cognitio, in moribus autem probitas, summumque pietatis studium, supra communem modum semper existimata sunt. Quod de ejus vita hominum judicium, beata mors sanctissime ac pacatissime ab ea obita, divino quoque confirmavit testimonio. Obiit, mutato solo, a salute DLV supra mille, suæ ætatis XXIX. Hic cum marito et Emilio fratre sepulta."

The citizens of Schweinfurth resolved that the house Olympia had inhabited among them should be rebuilt at the public cost, and marked out to the respect of future generations by an inscription commemorative of her having dwelt on that spot. The inscription is indicative of the high esteem of the worthy burghers for their celebrated fellow-citizen, rather than of any æsthetic appreciation of her productions. For the hexameters and pentameters into which Schweinfurth has painfully packed its sentiments, are of a kind to make the classical ghost of Olympia shudder, if that

erudite and gentle spirit may be supposed to have cognisance of them.

Olympia Morata had in the course of this short life acquired a high European reputation. The loving care of Celio Curione, the editor of her works, has collected and appended to them, after the fashion of that day, an abundant selection of the "favourable notices" of her learned contemporaries. And M. Bonnet has gathered some further testimonies to the same effect. Many pages might be filled with the laudatory sayings of these high authorities. But it will probably be thought sufficient to state that the "eruditorum testimonia" do certainly prove that Olympia was very highly esteemed by the contemporary literary world of Europe. The most compendious and undeniable evidence of this may be found moreover in the fact, that four editions of her works were printed within twenty-five years after her death.*

To the present writer's thinking, the greatness of this reputation must appear to us of the nineteenth century a noticeable indication of a past and gone phase of literary history, rather than as a result that we should have anticipated from an examination of the works in question. In Curione's dedication of the volume to Queen Elizabeth, he says; "This book will prove the marvellous knowledge of Olympia, her zeal for religion, her patience under severe trials, and her unshakeable constancy in adversity." Understanding "marvellous knowledge" to mean very remarkable accuracy of classical scholarship, it is true, that the book *does* prove all this. And there is every reason to think that nothing more would be proved if we were in

* All of them at Bâle, with the following dates, 1558, 1562, 1570, 1580. That of 1570 has been referred to in these pages.

possession of those other writings whose loss Curione and M. Bonnet deplore. "She had composed," her old friend goes on to say in his dedication, "many other writings which should have perpetuated the fame of her faith and her talents, but which perished in the destruction of her adopted country. That which remains will suffice to give you an idea of that which has been lost." In another passage of the dedication he tells us what these were.

"She had written observations on Homer; she had composed with great elegance many verses, especially on divine themes; and certain dialogues, both Latin and Greek had been elaborated by her with such a perfection of imitation of Plato and Cicero, that not Zoilus himself could have found any fault in them."

There is no reason to doubt that, as Curione says, the remaining writings give a very sufficient idea of those which have perished; and as little to question the very remarkable skill in classical imitation which marked them.

Nevertheless, the world will hardly be persuaded that it has sustained any loss by the destruction of these once so much prized manuscripts. The loss of the letters, which form the bulk of the volume that good Curione's care has given us, would have been more regrettable. These have still an historical interest, as contributing many graphic touches to the picture we are able to form for ourselves, of that complex, seething, labouring time. It may be added, that they offer also an ethical delineation which the world has still a use for. These letters *do*, as Curione says, show a lively picture of the writer's "zeal for religion, patience under trial, and unshakeable constancy in

adversity;" one of these pictures which the world cannot wisely allow to be effaced.

But it was not the manifestation of these fine qualities which obtained for Olympia that great reputation among her contemporaries which is itself an historical phenomenon of no slight importance. It was not her patience under trial, and constancy in adversity, that caused Europe so to ring with her name that the echo of it has reached these days. Fine and noble things as these are, the world has at no time been so poor in them, as not to have possessed many noteworthy examples of them, which fame has had no time to note. Olympia's reputation was due to her learning, exclusive, be it observed, of any of the affectionate sympathy with which she was regarded by her co-religionists on account of her steady adherence to her religious convictions. For Tiraboschi, Quadrio, and other Romanist writers, while lamenting her heresy, speak as warmly as any of her literary merits. Her fame was the reward of such skilful "perfection in the imitation of Cicero and Plato, that not even Zoilus could pick out a fault in her compositions." Many a scholar of mature age enjoyed the respect of his contemporaries in that century, in virtue of a life spent in obtaining that proficiency of which Olympia was mistress in her teens. And though such an amount of admiration for scholarship must seem strange and excessive to an age which considers similar proficiency in young gentlemen in their teens quite sufficiently rewarded by the presentation of a handsomely bound volume with some school-founder's arms stamped in gold on the side; still it must be borne in mind, that the difficulties overcome by the sixteenth century young lady were of a very far more formidable kind,

than those, which lie in the way of the nineteenth century young gentleman. Corrupt texts, and scarcity of them, inexperienced and but partially competent teachers, unsettled and very little understood principles of exegesis and criticism, the absence of all that luxury of philological apparatus, which waits on the modern scholar, made the path of the medieval explorers into the jungle of the ancient literature, a very different thing from that of the traveller along its roads, cleared and embellished by the assiduous labour of three hundred years.

Much indefatigable industry, many long and weary hours passed in bending over books, while others were spending youthful hours in youthful enjoyments, and very considerable aptitude for appreciating the beauties, analogies, and delicacies of language, must have gone to the acquirement of that amount of scholarship which Olympia possessed at sixteen. But the same amount of industry and talent expended on any other subject would not have produced any such meed of enthusiastic admiration. And the position she occupied in her own day, must be considered as a curious indication of the avidity with which the cultivated minds of Europe seized on the new field opened to them, and seemed to think that it might be made to yield all that the human intelligence was then thirsting for.

But Olympia's classical successes, her Greek psalms, her Platonic dialogues, and her Ciceronian Latin, would not have made her more to the nineteenth century than one of the remarkable figures in the great picture of her time, worth preserving the outline of for the sake of the completeness of the general representation. And in truth she is something more than

this;—something more interesting to us, as a "representative woman," than a miracle of scholarly learning, an example of adversity nobly endured, or even a sufferer for conscience' sake.

The especial interest of Olympia Morata's story lies, for us, in the very remarkable contradiction it gives to the theories of those who object to learnedly—or as the habits of our time unfortunately make it correct to say—masculinely educated women. If ever there was a case in which adventitious circumstances contributed to bring about a result which would have furnished a moral on the other side of the question, it was that of Olympia. The advocates of the knitting needle and Lindley Murray may well have thought that the case was going all their own way, when that Greek verse exultation over abandoned feminalities was declaimed to an applauding court circle. Learning surely never had better vantage ground for effecting the mischief dreaded from it.

Yet how closely within call the while was all that is most valuable and womanly in woman! How promptly it was all forthcoming at the first touch of softening sorrow, or the first awakening thrill of maidenly love—those master agents in completing and perfecting woman's moral nature! Did Olympia's learning make her a less loving, or even a less housewifely wife? Did her competency to correspond with the scholars of Europe render her less capable of gaining the affection of friends of her own sex? Her Homeric studies did not keep her from visiting the poor in the plague-stricken poor-house of Schweinfurth; or detain her from her solitary watch by her sick husband's bedside. No Ciceronian paradoxes were running in her head when all her energies had to be devoted to the

reconstructing her own and her husband's home in a strange city; nor did love of study make her forget that "a household was sure to go wrong when the mistress's back was turned."

Vittoria Colonna was learned, and a good womanly woman to boot, though she was far less learned, and of far shallower moral nature than Olympia. But then Vittoria was a princess, and therefore much less to the purpose as a sample of the compatibility of high education and intellectual pursuits, with the exemplary discharge of all a woman's ordinary duties. Olympia was the wife of a poor man, and one struggling with difficulties of no ordinary kind. Yet it would be difficult to imagine for him a fitter, more helpful, or more wifely helpmate than Andreas Grünthler found in his reclaimed "Grecian virgin."

ISABELLA ANDREINI.

(1562.—1604.)

Italian love for the theatre.—Italian dramatic literature.—Tragedy.—Comedy.—Tiraboschi's notion of it.—Macchiavelli's Mandragola.—Isabella's high standing among her contemporaries.—Her husband.—Her high character.—Death and epitaph.—Her writings.—Nature and value of histrionic art.

ISABELLA ANDREINI, say her Italian biographers,* was one of the greatest actresses who ever lived. She was also a writer of dramatic and other works, much esteemed by her contemporaries.

She was born in 1562, two years before the birth of Shakspeare; and was therefore delighting the courts of Italy and France at the same time that he was catering for the amusement of a more mixed audience at the Globe. It is true that Shakspeare is . . . Shakspeare, by virtue of his creative genius, and not of his histrionic talent; while Isabella owed the larger portion of her fame to the latter source. Besides, it would be of course unjust to the Italian actress, as well as preposterous, to dream of instituting any comparison between her and nature's unique master-piece; though her reputation among her contemporaries was probably greater and more noisy than any which

* Mazzuchelli, tom. i. p. 711.

testified that the England of Elizabeth's time had a suspicion that a poet for all time had been born among them.

No such comparison is meant even to be hinted. But the contemporaneousness of the English and Italian dramatic artist suggests an inquiry into the materials with which the latter had to work.

We know what quality of dramatic literature was provided for the actors who plied their calling at the Globe and the Bankside. And it is certain that no one of them has left that histrionic reputation among us which Isabella Andreini has left in Italy.

With this in one's mind, then, one is surprised to find at the first glance that Italian literature in its Augustan age was especially weak in the department of the drama. Quite the reverse might have been anticipated from the national characteristics. No people are at the present day more passionately fond of theatrical representation. The theatre is with them almost a necessary of life to all classes of citizens, and takes rank among the articles of an Italian's budget, if not absolutely side by side with sufficient food, yet in very many cases, immediately after it, and always has precedence of very many matters that with us would be considered necessaries. And the impressionable nature of the people makes this very intelligible. Every Italian is an actor more or less,—has a natural talent for "externating" the feelings that are in him, to use a very expressive Italian phrase,—a talent that Englishmen are perhaps more deficient in than any other people under the sun. To us how often is it distasteful, how often impossible to "externare,"—to make outwardly manifest—that which is inside us. How frequently is the act of another doing so revolting

to us; especially in matters which touch the deeper and more powerful sentiments of the heart! To an Italian it is never either difficult or distasteful in real life; and he is ever ready to sympathise with and be pleased by a very moderate amount of histrionic skill on the stage

It might naturally be expected that the dramatic literature of a people so constituted would be a prominent feature in the intellectual produce of the national mind at its period of greatest vigour; and would have exercised a notable influence in the moulding and fashioning its habits of thought and turns of expression. Such is, however, far from being the case. The poets, the novelists, the historians, the moralists of Italy in the sixteenth century time of its high tide, have all left their marks deeply and visibly enough stamped on the national character, while that of the dramatists of the same period is barely, if at all, perceptible.

It needs but a cursory examination of the Italian drama of the sixteenth century, to remove all wonder that its authors should have exercised no such influence. The wonder is, that when literature in its other branches was so vigorous and full of sap, drama should have been so sapless and of such little worth. From the earliest years of the sixteenth century there was no lack of either tragedies or comedies in Italy. But the mention of them and their authors would be little more for the most part than a roll-call of names forgotten, at least on our side of the Alps, and destined never more to be remembered.

Tragedy was paralysed by the influence of the Greek models, which the sixteenth century writers made it their chief aim to copy. The servility of imitation,

which was pernicious in every department of literature, was fatal to that, which above all others needs to be the expression of life, when it strove to force it into the forms of a social existence long since dead. A very cursory examination of the "Sophonisba" of Trissino, of the "Rosmonda" and the "Orestes" of Rucellai, or of the more celebrated "Canacci" of Speroni—works which attained a higher celebrity in their time than most of their contemporaries or followers—will be sufficient to show why such productions could never be to the Italians what the Elizabethan dramatic literature has been to us.

As to comedy, Tiraboschi* complains that the comic writers and actors of that period "strove to obtain that applause which they had no hope of so easily gaining in any other way, by a brazen-faced impudence of words, gestures, and action; so that in those free and dissolute times, it was too much the case that a comedy was the more applauded the more filthy it was."† And Giglio Gregorio Giraldi (Olympia Morata's gouty old friend) exclaims in one of his dialogues: "O tempora! O mores! Every abomination is again reproduced upon the stage. Everywhere stories are represented, which the general feeling of the Christian world had rejected, banished, and abolished. And these are now recalled and placed upon the stage by prelates and bishops, not to speak of princes!" But a more cogent reason why these indecent productions, as well as those not deserving of condemnation on this ground, could never have taken any real hold on the national mind, may be found in worthy Tiraboschi's notion of what was necessary to make such works all that could be wished.

* Lib. iii. cap. iii. sect. 61. † Cited, *ibid.*

"Comedy," says he,* "the personages of which are for the most part plebeian, or at least of private station, and the action of which is generally familiar and domestic in its character, is of its own nature low and trivial. And if it is not sustained by a certain elegance of style—which is all the more difficult to attain, in that it must be natural—and by an ingenious, and at the same time probable plot, abounding in movement and surprising turns, it altogether falls to earth; and it is almost impossible to endure either the representation or the perusal of it."

The learned historian of Italian literature does not seem to have the remotest suspicion, that a large and deep knowledge of human nature, that the wide and penetrating observation of its similitudes and dissimilitudes, its contrasts, inconsistencies, and analogies, which supply wit with its material, and the genial power of sympathising with its thousand moods, which generates humour, may be either necessary or desirable to a comic writer. If Tiraboschi may be accepted as spokesman for his countrymen in this matter, we have an abundantly sufficient explanation of the small share which the Muses of the sock and buskin have had in forming that portion of the national mind which takes its shape from the national literature, and to which their sisters of the Nine have notably contributed.

But even comedy, though not in the same degree as tragedy, laboured under the additional disqualification inflicted on it by the prevailing mania for classical imitation. In this case the model worked from was Latin instead of Greek, and generally rather Plautus than Terence. An instance worthy of note may be

* Tiraboschi, lib. iii. cap. iii. sect. 61.

cited in the "Sporta" or "Money-bag" of Giambattisto Gelli, the celebrated Florentine shoemaker, who became Consul of the Academy of Florence. In the prologue to this comedy he urges, in excuse for all shortcomings, that "it is surely a wonder that he has accomplished so much, having all day long to ply scissors and needle, which, womanly tools though they be, were never, as far as his reading tells him, taken in hand by the Muses." Here we have a man of the people, from whom some original conceptions drawn from native popular life might have been expected. But the shoemaker was as classical as his superiors; and his "Sporta" is little more than a disguisement of Plautus in Florentine costume.

Macchiavelli's well known comedy, the "Mandragola," is the most notable exception to what has been said of the plays of Isabella Andreini's day. A genuine type of character altogether belonging to his own time, and full of the elements of high comedy, was embodied in Frà Timoteo, the tartuffe monk; by the daring Secretary. But it is an exception, which but proves the rule.

What then are the sort of characters, in which we are to suppose that Isabella produced an effect so extraordinary? The testimonies of the extent of her power over her audiences are abundant. Padua, her native city, enrolled her at an early age in the list of the "Intenti" academicians. Among these "Intent" votaries of literature, her nickname, according to the puerile practice of such bodies, was "l'Accesa"—"the Inflamed one." The company of comedians, to which she, and her husband Francisco Andreini, also an actor and writer, belonged, were called the "Gelosi"—"Jealous ones." So that Isabella's full

style and titles, as they stand in the title pages of her works, run thus; "Isabella Andreini, Comica Gelosa, Accademica Intenta, detta l'Accesa."

Her son, Giovanni Battista Andreini, himself an actor and voluminous play-wright, has collected an entire volume entitled "Apollo's Lament," composed of the pieces of poetry by his mother's contemporaries, written in her praise. Another numerous selection of such tributes from most of the leading literary men and women of that day written on the occasion of her death, is prefixed to a volume of her poetry, printed at Milan in 1605.

Having acted with the greatest applause before most of the Italian courts, we find that she passed with her husband's company of players into France, where the "Gelosi" enjoyed under the patronage of the French court a very high reputation, until Isabella's death deprived them of their principal support and attraction. A letter from Henry IV. is recorded,* in which he addresses her in the most flattering and at the same time respectful terms.

A fine medal, not unfrequently met with in the cabinets of collectors, was struck in her honour, having on the obverse her portrait, with the words "D. Isabella Andreini, C. G."—*Comica Gelosa*, that is to say; and on the reverse a full length figure of Fame with the legend "Æterna fama."

The celebrated Ericio Puteano wrote the following inscription for her portrait.

"Hanc vides, et hanc audis;
Tu disputa, Argus esse malis ut videas
An Midas, ut audias.
Tantum enim sermonem vultus

* Mazzuchelli. vita.

Quantum sermo vultum commendat;
Quorum alterutro æterna esse potuisset,
Cum vultum omnibus simulacris emendatiorem
Et sermonem omni Suada venustiorem possideat."

"See her, and hear her!" as one may say; "and then doubt, whether you would rather be Argus to see the more, or Midas to hear the more. For face and voice contribute equally to increase the bewitchment of either. Both should have been eternal; for the face was more perfect than any likeness can present it, and the voice sweeter than that of Persuasion's self."

Under another portrait was written; "You admire, reader, this portrait of the histrionic Muse! What would be your feelings, if you could hear her!"

The Cardinal Cinthio Aldobrandini, nephew of Pope Clement VIII., wrote a number of poems in her praise, and dedicated his works to her.

Franciscus Pola of Verona, and Leonardo Tedesco, who wrote himself "physician and philosopher," made Anagrams on her name, one discovering that she was "Alia blanda sirena;" and the other questioning whether she were "lira ne, an labris Dea." A panel was painted with Isabella on one side and Pallas on the other; and of course the wits discovered in verses more complimentary to Isabella than to Minerva, that

"Utraque est Pallas, atq. Isabella utraque est."

Torquato Tasso wrote a sonnet on her; Charles Emanuel of Savoy, admired and patronised her; and she was generally spoken of as "Decoro delle Muse;" and "Ornamento dei Teatri." Ventura of Bergamo, in a dedicatory letter declares that she "joined beauty to propriety, freedom to modesty, excellent speech with virtuous deeds, lofty intelligence with affable

manners, and in short all that is most charming to all that is most solid." Of Italy she was, he says, "nothing less than the absolute queen, seeing that she was the mistress (in no ill sense, *padrona*) of the princes who ruled it." He adds that "the olive of Pallas was on her lips, in her face the gardens of Adonis, in her bosom the banquet of the Gods, around her waist the girdle of Venus, in her arms chaste love and the celestial Venus. So that one must conclude," says this moderate gentleman, that "she was the most choice product of all that the past had brought forth, or the present was blessed with."

But what is more satisfactory and remarkable is, that Isabella's husband entertained as high an idea of her merits as the rest of the world, and when he lost her, was inconsolable. This Francesco Andreini must have been a remarkable man in his profession himself. He understood the French, Spanish, Polish, Greek, and Turkish languages; and was the author of various plays, dialogues, &c. His professional nickname was "Il Capitano Spavento," Captain Terror; and his favourite parts, we are told, were swaggering and braggadocio swashbucklers. But poor Capitano Spavento had no more heart for the business after he had lost his Isabella. His occupation was gone; and the stage became distasteful to him. The troop of the "Gelosi," went to the dogs, and he took to writing instead of acting. In the preface to one of his books he says; "after the death of my dearly loved wife Isabella, I was advised by many of my friends to write and publish something that I might preserve my name from oblivion, and might worthily follow in the honoured steps of my wife."

All this gifted woman's contemporaries are unani-

mous in testifying to her perfect propriety of conduct. In an age when the relaxation of morals was extreme and general, when princesses led the lives of courtesans, when nunneries were scenes of disorder, and princes of the church were noticeable among other princes for greater dissoluteness, this beautiful and universally flattered and courted actress won her way through all the difficulties, dangers, and snares that must have beset her path, without a stain on her character. We know that much of what she must have been obliged to touch, was pitch; and yet she remained undefiled. Mazzuchelli writes; "what was most remarkable in her was, that in a profession universally judged to be dangerous to female honour, she joined to a rare beauty, the most perfect correctness, and a most blameless life." And he adds, oddly enough, "the value of these good gifts was increased by her skill in singing, and music, and by her knowledge of Spanish!"

On the 10th of June, 1604, Isabella died in childbirth at Lyons, in the forty-second year of her age, and was buried by the municipality of that city with much pomp, and all sorts of honours. Her husband placed the following inscription over her tomb.

D. O. M.

"Isabella Andreina, Patavina, Mulier magnâ virtute prædita, Honestatis Ornamentum, maritalisque Pudicitiæ Decus, Ore facunda, Mente fœcunda, religiosa, pia, Musis amica, et Artis scenicæ Caput, hic Resurrectionem expectat. Ob Obortum obiit IV. Idus Junii, MDCIV. annum agens XLII. Franciscus Andreinus Conjux mœstissimus posuit."

In English, freely rendered—

"Isabella Andreini, of Padua, a most highly gifted

woman, the Soul of Honour, a model of conjugal chastity, eloquent of tongue, fertile of genius, religious, pious, beloved by the Muses, and a most distinguished member of the histrionic profession, here awaits her Resurrection. She died from a miscarriage on the 10th of June, 1604, in the 42nd year of her age. Francesco Andreini, her deeply afflicted husband, placed this monument."

Bayle remarks on the close juxtaposition of the statement of her profession, and her expectation of resurrection; and observes that the circumstance may serve to prove, that the severity of the Church on the subject of the sepulture of comedians had been much exaggerated. But it would be more correct to say, that it proves the action of the Church in carrying out its views and principles to have been fitful, irregular, and subordinated to circumstances, as it in truth ever has been. In the long, ceaseless battle of the Church through century after century, against all that is not-church, it has always known how to retire temporarily from a point likely to be too hotly contested, without by any means abandoning the hope of reconquering the ground at a more favourable moment. Always pushing on the advanced posts of its pretentions in accurate correspondence with the amount of resistance it has been met by, the polemical battle-front which it has shown to its enemies from Pekin to Peru, has never been straight drawn by the rule of immutable principles, but ever a wavy line, with undulations constantly in movement. And the startling fact that at Lyons, in the year 1604, Isabella Andreini, avowing her calling, was at the same time permitted to assert publicly, that she hoped for resurrection to life eternal, shows only, that so audacious a solecism was overlooked, because her

standing in the public esteem,' and the mood of the Lyons world at the moment, made it unwise to select that occasion for asserting the ecclesiastical claims.

Isabella's published works consist of a pastoral drama called "Mirtilla," written when she was very young, and of which she herself speaks slightingly at a later period of her life;—a volume of poems, some of which are declared by Italian critics to have much merit;—a collection of "Letters," (not real correspondence, unfortunately, but essays written for the press);—and lastly, some dialogues collected, as the title-page tells us, by "Francesco Andreini, comico geloso, detto il Capitano Spavento."

In a dedication of the "Letters" to the Duke of Savoy, she says, that they are the fruit of long vigils, and of hours snatched with difficulty from the avocations of her most laborious profession, and that her object in the composition of them was, as far as in her lay, to preserve her name from oblivion after death. With this view she has written some hundred and fifty little treatises on such subjects as "The force of friendship," "Of the constancy of women," "Lovers' prayers," "Prayers of an honourable lover," "Of jealousy," "Of marriage," "Of love and war," "Of lovers' suspicions," and the like.

Poor Isabella! How desperately she must have struggled during those long night hours, after the labours of the day, against weariness and want of rest, as she toiled on in pursuit of immortal fame!

A given number of hours on the treadmill would probably be deemed by most extant men far more endurable, than a similar number spent in reading the pages thus industriously put together. Nevertheless,

if these sentences can help her on for a year or two more in her fight against oblivion, she is heartily welcome to the lift.

The dialogues are on similar themes, and of exactly similar quality. I have read one (being probably the only living man who has done so), between Palamedes and Cleopatra, entitled, "An amorous dispute respecting a fainting fit caused by love." It is truly wonderful to consider, that human beings, with minds similarly constituted to our own, did read these writings with admiration and delight! And when one looks on the long, long road that human intellect must have travelled over, since that was possible, one cannot but reflect on the probability, that a yet more extended career must lie before it.

These are the means by which the beautiful Isabella Andreini sought to "avoid death," as she phrases it in one of her prefaces, and to live in the memory of mankind; means which have been successful, so far as to insure the registering of her name in the folio pages of those gatherers of literary crumbs, who have been more abundant in Italy than in any other country.

But it is evident that in the day when she was really famous, her fame was that of a great actress. Of all the modes by which one mind may influence its fellows and obtain their admiration, it has been said that that of the histrionic artist is, from its nature, necessarily the most evanescent and perishable. The poet's song, the sculptor's statue, the architect's building, the historian's history, the painter's picture, remain to us, and their authors "being dead, yet speak" to after generations. But the actor, whose immediate power over his public is more intense, perhaps, than that of any of these! His triumphs, however much involving the

necessity of intellectual power, having been achieved by means of a perishable machine, are condemned to be equally mortal. The only manner in which some memory of his power, and some conception of its working may be retained in the minds of men, is by attaching his name to that of the characters he has represented. It is thus that the great names of our own dramatic annals have still a real meaning and significance.

But Isabella Andreini has left us no such memorial. Of all the very numerous contemporaries who speak in rapture of her performances, not one has recorded a single hint as to the characters in which she enchanted them. The omission seems a most singular one, and can be accounted for on no other supposition, than that the written words which the actress was to speak were considered a comparatively insignificant part of her performance: and the nature of the praises lavished on her acting seem to point to the same conclusion. We hear much of voice, action, grace, and charm of elocution, but nothing of those higher matters of histrionic art which raise it to the level of an intellectual profession. Nothing is said of the effect produced on the minds of the audience, nothing of conception and interpretation of character, nothing of empire over the sources of smiles and tears.

And these facts seem to furnish an explanation of the difficulty of accounting for a great dramatic reputation, at a time when dramatic literature was such as has been described.

There was indeed one form of dramatic composition, not properly to be classed with either tragedy or comedy, that has not been mentioned. These were the pastoral pieces, "favole boschereccie," poems rather than dramas, of which Tasso's "Aminta" is the great

example, and to which Isabella's own "Mirtilla" also belonged. From the circumstance of her having herself written in that style, and more still from the high place which the "Aminta" occupied in the public favour, it may be deemed almost certain that the leading actress of the day must have appeared in the part of Silvia. The superiority of this charming little gem of Tasso's to the generality of the contemporary dramatic writings is very marked. But its charms, its idyllic elegance, its Theophrastic echoes, its melodious verse, are not dramatic charms. And though we may fancy a beautiful woman, mistress of graceful elocution, and skilled in drawing all its music from polished Italian verse, uttering Silvia's disclaimer,

"Pianto d' amor non già, ma di pietade,"

with infinite charm of expression, still, any pleasure to be derived from the stage presentation of such a poem as the "Aminta," and any histrionic excellences to be manifested by the exponents of it, must be deemed to be of a very inferior rank indeed, to aught that modern times have learned to expect from those whom the world now considers great actors. And on the whole, this record of a great Italian actress contemporary with Shakspeare, must be considered to indicate that even if the great master's works be left out of the question as exceptional, drama stood higher, and was more appreciated in the great sixteenth century among the "toto divisos orbe Britannos," than in Italy, the metropolis of literary culture.

BIANCA CAPPELLO.

(1548—1587.)

CHAPTER I.

The pretty version of the story;—and the true version of the same.—Saint Mark's Square at Florence.—Bianca's beauty.—The Medici *en famille*.—The Casino of St. Mark.—The Proprieties.—"Cosa di Francesco."

In one of the twelve million volumes * of the Archives of Venice, preserved in the two hundred and ninety-eight rooms of the suppressed convent of St. Maria dei Frari, there is one pointed out to our notice by the learned and accurate Emmanuele † Cigogna, in which certain passages have been blotted out; and in the margin opposite to them are written, in clerk's Latin, the words, "Obliterated by order of the Council of Ten." The volume in question is a register of criminal processes before the court of the "Avvogaria" for the year 1563. But the "Avvogadori" (members of one of the numerous magistracies of Venice, whose attributions were partly those of police magistrates, and partly such as belong to a public prosecutor), in obeying the commands of "The Ten," did not reckon on the lynx-eyed curiosity of modern peerers into the secrets of the

* Venezia e sue Lagune. Vol. ii. part 2. Ap. p. 6.

† Bianca Capello. Cenni storico-critici. Venezia, 1828.

past. "As this obliteration," says Signor Cigogna, "was not effected by the knife, but only by drawing a pen with a different ink over the lines, the passages scratched out have been very clearly decyphered by the skill and sharp eyes of Signor Marco Solari, the paleographer." And the secret, which the terrible "Ten" thought to hide for evermore, thus divulged, and stripped of its clerk's Latin dress, is to this effect.

"Whereas Pietro Bonaventuri of Florence, resident in this city with his uncle Giovanni Batista Bonaventuri, close to the church of St. Apollinore, hath been accused before the criminal court of the Forty; that with audacious insolence and disrespect for the nobles of Venice, he, knowing that Bianca, the daughter of Bartolommeo Cappello, was an heiress of no small fortune, and thinking that he could get possession of such property if he could in any way lead the girl astray—(*si puellam ipsam aliquâ ratione falleret*)—dared to take her from the house of her father in the night following the 28th day of November, in the year 1563, having deceived her by many falsehoods, while she has barely completed her sixteenth year, and afterwards to take her with him from Venice, thus contaminating the race and house of a noble Venetian, in contempt of the laws, and against the public morals of this city; and whereas the said Pietro, notwithstanding diligent search, hath not been taken into custody, it is ordered, that if at any time he shall be arrested, he shall be brought to Venice, where, at the accustomed hour, on a lofty scaffold erected between the two columns on the piazza, his head shall be stricken from his shoulders by the public executioner, so that he die." Then follows the promise of a reward offered by Bartolommeo Cappello, the father, in addition to that

promised by the government, to any one who will bring in the body of the culprit, alive or dead, or give satisfactory proof of having killed him anywhere beyond the territory of the republic. Another long judgment follows against those suspected of having aided the couple in their flight, and specially against a certain Maria Donati, "for that, being a serving-maid in the house of the noble gentleman, Bartolommeo Cappello, she perfidiously and audaciously dared, at the instance of Pietro Bonaventuri, to give him her aid * in seducing and enticing away Bianca, the daughter of the aforesaid Bartolommeo, so that she not only had intercourse with the aforesaid Peter, but fled away from her father's house and from Venice."

Further, a MS. chronicle of the time, cited by Cigogna, † states, "that Bianca left Venice under a disgracing ban, so that, if she returned, she would be put to death."

These judicial records are terribly unmanageable material in a biographer's hand. To think that a lynx-eyed paleographer, by poking out one volume among twelve million, and therein decyphering what was meant to be concealed for ever three hundred years ago, should have utterly spoiled for us the pretty romantic story, with which Bianca's adventures have generally been understood to commence. Romantic and despairing passion of the young Florentine banker's clerk, shot to the heart by glances darted across the narrow canal from the noble palace opposite;—(alas! the same detestable registers prove, that the Florentine bank in which Bonaventuri was employed was not opposite, but in a line with the Cappello palace, and out of

* Note 1.

† Cigogna, p. 26.

glance-shot;)—chance meeting at matins; imprudent but innocent interviews at early dawn, with palace door left ajar to secure the means of timely return; unhappy stroke of destiny in the shape of the baker going his early rounds, and, thinking to do well, shutting fatally the half-open palace door, and cutting off all retreat from the unfortunate maiden thus forced by terror and despair to sudden and unpremeditated flight with her lover:—all knocked to the ground like a child's card house, by the interference of a lynx-eyed, dry-as-dust paleographer!

So the Florentine banker's clerk was a vulgar fortune-hunter, scheming to carry off an heiress! Bianca herself was not only "no better," as the classic phrase goes, but very perceptibly worse, "than she should have been!"—(another MS.* chronicle declares that, being motherless, and not very sharply looked after, she took to "freer habits of life than were usual among noble Venetian damsels"). The flight from Venice was a planned and got up thing, not unaccompanied, say some† authorities, by a carefully-selected trousseau of the family jewels; and the baker, unconscious, but fatal instrument in the hands of destiny, a myth!

All this pretty story, then, which shares with so many others still prettier, the misfortune of not being in accordance with fact, has to be regretfully abandoned. Regretfully also must be sacrificed all the detailed account of Bianca's journey with Bonaventuri to Florence, with various adventures on the road,—hiding at Ferrara, and narrow escape there from the secret emissaries of the republic, &c. &c., which adorns the more

* Cigogna, *ibid.* p. 19.

† Siebenkees. Life of Bianca. Gotha, 1789.—Sismondi.

or less fictitious accounts of the matter, that have been written in great number upon the "romance of history" plan. All these things may have happened; but unhappily there is no authority for saying that they did so.

A poor fact-bound biographer, therefore, having due fear of Dryasdust before his eyes, finds himself obliged to shape his statement in this fashion..

One Pietro Bonaventuri, a young Florentine, employed in a Florentine bank at Venice, found the means of becoming acquainted with Bianca, the motherless daughter of the noble Bartolommeo Cappello, a young lady then in her sixteenth year, but already noted for conduct none of the strictest; and noted also as the heiress of a considerable fortune. Giving her falsely to understand, as there is reason to believe,* that he was a member of the great Salviati family, Bonaventuri induced her to accord him secret meetings, and continued this intercourse till Bianca found herself to be with child. The couple thereupon determined on a secret flight to Florence, there to be married. And they did accordingly leave Venice on the night of the 28th of November, 1563; and did succeed, notwithstanding condemnation to death and large rewards for their apprehension, in reaching Florence in safety.

That the journey was one of difficulty and danger, may also be asserted without fear of error; for the roadless Apennine had to be crossed; it was winter; and the sixteen-year-old fugitive was not in a condition to perform such travel safely. But we get no distinct sight of the pair, from the time of their flight on that 29th of November, till we find them married and

* Cigogna, p. 7.

lodged in comparative safety in the poor dwelling—"tugurio"—of the bridegroom's mother in the Piazza di San* Marco at Florence. In comparative, but by no means in absolute safety. For the Queen of the Adriatic had long arms, and, as treaties of extradition had not then come into use, it was a common practice for rulers to execute by the hand of a hired assassin in a foreign country, the sentence, which the culprit's flight made it impossible for them to carry out more regularly at home. Assassinations were extremely common then in the streets of Florence; and the "brave ones," whose trade it was to commit them, were not likely to neglect so good a job, as that commissioned by the "most Serene" Republic.

So Bianca and her husband had to keep themselves close prisoners in the little house in the square of St. Mark. She had found out by this time, that he was no Salviati, but a poor clerk, now without a clerkship. And he had found out, that he had calculated amiss on those six thousand crowns, which Bianca inherited from her mother, and which, according to the Venetian law-records, had been to him the maiden's chief attraction. For the Republic declared them to be confiscated! A state of things not calculated, it may be feared, to conduce to that mutual affection, which must have been so necessary to make their misfortunes, and imprisonment in the little "tugurio," endurable.

But while they were thus courting obscurity the story of their flight was making much noise in Italy. The abduction of a Venetian noble's heiress was a serious thing. All Venice felt the insult; and the

* Litta. Famiglia Medici. Art.—Bianca.

reward for Bonaventuri's head was published in every city. It thus came to pass, that Francesco, Duke Cosmo's eldest son, the heir apparent to the throne of Tuscany, heard the story, and, at the same time, that the fugitives were then in Florence. And as rumour was also saying extraordinary things of Bianca's beauty, he conceived a strong desire to see the heroine of the story.

All the contemporary writers speak much of this same beauty and fascination; but it must be admitted, that the portraits and medals, which remain to show us what she really was, do not by any means confirm their praises. It is true, that these representations of her show her to us at a later period of her life, and that the coarse strongly marked features may well have been less repulsive at sixteen. Montaigne, in the course of his tour in Italy, saw her at the Tuscan court, and has written that she was "handsome, according to the taste of the Italians, having a cheerful and plump face, considerable stoutness of person, and a bosom such as they admire." This description of her face tallies very well with the portraits, and specially with a medal which must have been struck in her later years. It is a face well calculated to express jovial, convivial cheerfulness, but coarse, vulgar, and insolent in the extreme. And to this must be added, hair, which only a courtier's flattery could term "auburn," and an ungracefully stout person. This, however, as Montaigne hints, is not in Italy thought as incompatible with beauty as on this side of the Alps; and hair, that we should term decidedly red, is often much admired among the Italians.

Francesco was at the time of Bianca's arrival in Florence, in his twenty-third year, and, as far as can

be judged from the reports of the contemporary writers, had up to that time distinguished himself rather as a reader and student than in any less creditable way. The Court of Cosmo, however, was by no means a favourable school for the education of his children. Some of the scenes recorded by contemporary writers as having been witnessed there are of a nature wholly irreproducible here. And in the last year before that of Bianca's arrival at Florence, the year 1562, had occurred one of those horrible domestic tragedies, which seem to have been a peculiar specialty of the Medicean race.

Cosmo's two sons, Giovanni and Garzia, the former nineteen and a cardinal of two years' standing, and the latter fifteen years of age, were hunting together near Leghorn. Some dispute arose respecting the sport, on which the younger brother gave the elder a mortal wound with his rapier. Giovanni died at Leghorn. Garzia presented himself before his father to implore his pardon for the crime; and was killed by a similar wound from his father's sword, as he knelt at his feet! Of course other and unexceptionably legitimate causes were found and published to account for both deaths. All which the respectable classes pretended to believe; but jotted down their own notions of the matter in "ricordi," destined to be safely buried in the family muniment rooms; but destined also to infallible resurrection at the summons of inevitable Dryasdust. While the unrespectable classes noted to each other under their breath, that the bodies of the two princes had not been exposed to the public view, as was the often inconvenient custom with regard to dead highnesses; and muttered their conclusions accordingly. The mother of the two

princes, Eleonora di Toledo, died of grief as was supposed, and as might well be, in the same year.

Shortly afterwards the more consolable father, having given in marriage to a scion of the noble family of Panciatici his mistress, Eleonora degli Albizzi, whom her noble father had sold to him, asked another noble father of Florence for his daughter, the beautiful Camilla Martelli, to be her successor. The honour was of course gratefully accepted by the proud patrician, and Camilla Martelli became the mother of Virginia de' Medici in 1568. But soon afterwards the lady began to be troubled with scruples of conscience, and consulted his Holiness, Pius V., upon the subject, who counselled *patience!* meaning that she should wait and see whether the sovereign might not be induced to marry her. And accordingly as it happened, that state reasons made it desirable for Cosmo to conciliate the pontiff, he decided on gaining his heart entirely by marrying "La Martelli" in 1570, and by giving up to the Church his subject Carnesecchi, to be burned as a heretic.

The other members of the family at the time of Bianca's arrival in Florence, were Ferdinando, the second surviving son of the grand duke, who at the age of fourteen had just been made a cardinal, and who was generally at Rome; Pietro, a third son, aged nine; and Isabella, Cosmo's daughter, who had been married to Paolo Giordano Orsini in 1558. She was, we are told, the life and brightest ornament of the Tuscan court. She had refused to follow her husband to Rome; and as Cosmo had supported her in her refusal, so far as manifesting his wish that she should continue to reside in Florence, Orsini had left her there, while he remained in his own city, and rarely or

never troubled his wife, who had no love for him, with his presence.

Such were the members of the Tuscan court in 1563-4; when Francesco determined to gratify his curiosity by getting in some way a sight of the beautiful stranger in Florence, who had been so much talked of. It was not very difficult to accomplish this. Somebody was found to suggest to Bianca and her mother-in-law, that they would do wisely to seek an interview with the Marchesa Mondragone, the wife of Francesco's Spanish tutor, who might very easily induce the prince to obtain from the Republic of Venice a pardon for her husband and herself. The bait was readily taken, and they were told that the Marchesa would receive them in the Casino of S. Marco.

This small but remarkably elegant building, rebuilt as it now stands in 1775 by the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, can hardly fail at the present day to attract the attention of any stranger passing through the Piazza of St. Mark. It was then a casino belonging to the Medici; and is still the property of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. A "casino" was an important portion of the social arrangements of those days. A "little house" for the transaction of such matters as the "convenances"—Anglice hypocrisies—did not allow of being conveniently carried on in the large house, which was the noble family's residence, was found to contribute very essentially to the maintenance of that propriety, which is so dear to a people to whom seeming is ever more important than being. Most of the wealthier members of the aristocracy had such conveniences, and the proprieties of Italian life would hardly have been by any possibility maintained without them.

Now this casino of the young Prince Francesco was,

as has been seen, very near the humble dwelling of Bianca. The "tugurio" of her husband was on the south side of the small square facing St. Mark's church, and the Prince's casino at right angles to it on the west side—not a stone's throw distant. So that Bianca and her mother-in-law were able to wait * on the kind Marchesa there, with very slight departure from their rule of not quitting the shelter of their home.

The Marchesa Mondragone received them with the utmost affability; inquired with most amiable interest into the particulars of Bianca's story; and, when it chanced that her husband the Marchese entered the room, she seized the opportunity of at once interesting him in the case. The affability of the Spaniard exceeded even that of his wife. He had not the least doubt of being able to induce his Excellency to use his influence with the Republic;—she might consider the matter as good as settled. Then the Marchesa suddenly bethought herself that she wanted to know, whether some dresses of hers were made in the right Venetian fashion. Would Bianca come with her and look at them, while the Marchese did himself the pleasure of remaining with the Signora Bonaventuri. So Bianca was walked off into another room with her charming new Spanish friend, who, after showing her some of those matters, which women, it seems, used to find amusement in looking at some three hundred years ago, under pretence of seeking keys to open other cupboards, or something of that sort, slipped away, leaving her guest alone, but fully occupied in admiring the profusion of magnificence that characterised the apartment she was in.

* Litta. Fam. Med. Art.—Bianca.

In another minute a curtain was raised from before an opposite door, and Bianca found herself alone with Francesco. The details of what passed at that first interview between these two persons, who for the remainder of their lives were to exercise so strange and so pernicious a reciprocal influence, are recorded by more than one writer.* Yet it is little likely that either of them should have afterwards repeated the mere matters of course proper to "the situation," which are set down as having been uttered by them. It is true, that "La Mondragone" may be well supposed to have been watching the happy progress of her handiwork within ear-shot. The only circumstance at all worth noting of all that is said to have passed, whether true or fictitious, is that Bianca is stated to have at once comprehended on seeing the Prince what his errand was, and the whole motive with which she had been induced to visit the Marchesa. She pleaded for "*her honour!*" He assured her that it should be abundantly cared for, &c. &c.

Whether the relationship in which they were thereafter to stand towards each other was finally settled there and then, or whether other such interviews were required for the completion of their arrangements does not appear. It was needful, it seems, even at Florence in 1564, that some regard should be paid to appearances by a prince in Francesco's position just at that time. A marriage was being arranged for him with Joan of Austria, daughter of the Emperor Francis, which was eventually celebrated in December 1565. And the German "barbari" might have taken offence if the prince's wooing of his wife and his

* Litta, *ibidem.*

mistress had been too openly simultaneous. It would have been *indecent*—would not have looked well, which was, above all things, what was needful. Francesco too was in that same year, 1564, entrusted with the reins of government by his father, who, though he did not formally abdicate the throne, yet left thenceforward all the management of State matters to his son.

So that under the circumstances the left-handed wooing had to seek for awhile the shelter of the Casino;—furnishing thus an excellent illustration of the utility of that convenient institution.

All then that the secrecy of that retreat has permitted us to know with certainty as to the duration of Bianca's resistance to the Prince is comprised in the fact, that everything was satisfactorily arranged between them within six months of her arrival in Florence.* And as after that arrival she gave birth to a daughter, named Pellegrina, it must be concluded, that no very great length of time was consumed in coming to an understanding.

And here it may be clearly stated that this was, as far as can be gathered from the writings of her innumerable abusers, Bianca's last fault *of this sort*. For the rest of her days she seems to have been perfectly faithful as mistress and as wife to Francesco. It is, perhaps, the only one word we shall have an opportunity of saying in her favour;—so mercifully inclined readers may make the most of it.

But, by the bye, the lady's husband! He seems to have been rather forgotten by us. But so he is also by the original tellers of the story. None of them hints a doubt of the possibility of his making any

* Cigogna. Cenni storico-critici. p. 9.

difficulty in the matter. We are shortly told, that the gracious sovereign appointed him to a place of "guarda-roba," some keeper of property of some sort. So things were made pleasant to all parties; and the adventurous banker's clerk made no difficulty in admitting that his wife was henceforward, as the chroniclers phrase is, "cosa di Francesco;"—goods belonging to his Highness.

CHAPTER II.

A favorite's husband.—The natural course of things.—Italian respectability.—The three brothers, Francesco, Ferdinand, and Pietro.—The ladies of the Court.—Francesco's temper—his avarice—and wealth.—Frolicsome days at Florence.—The Cardinal recommends respectability.—The Duke ensures it.—A Court dialogue.

WHATEVER considerations of decency may have at first thrown some measure of concealment around Francesco's connection with Bianca, their operation lasted but a very short time. The unfortunate Giovanna very soon found, not only that the place, which she should have occupied in her husband's affection, was already given away to another, but that most even of the external tokens of respect and homage which belonged to her position were usurped by the same audacious rival. The ascendancy exercised by Bianca over the weak mind of Francesco soon began to make itself manifest. It seems to have been at an early period of their connection, that she induced him solemnly to promise, "before a sacred image," that should a time come, when they should both be free, he would marry her. The promise originally made, that Francesco should use his influence to obtain the reversal of the sentence passed by the tribunals of the Republic against Bianca and her husband, was also duly performed, but ineffectually. The Senate of Venice refused either to pardon the culprits, or to

restore the six thousand crowns of Bianca's inheritance.*

One, who stood in the envied and distinguished position of Bonaventuri, however, could easily dispense with his wife's fortune. The husband of the sovereign's mistress was in no great want of six thousand crowns. Bonaventuri became, naturally, one of the distinguished members of the Florentine "jeunesse dorée;" and soon showed himself fitted by nature to shine in such society, despite his clerkly bringing up.

There was at that time among the ornaments of the society of Florence a young and beautiful widow, Cassandra Bongianni; who was well inclined to avail herself to any extent of the freedom from restraint such a position secured to her. But Cassandra Bongianni had been "nata" Cassandra Ricci, and that proud and powerful family had intimated to the gay widow their intention not to permit any scandal to be cast on the family name by irregularities of hers. And the warning had been already significantly enough enforced by the assassination of two pretenders to the widow's favour. A Cavalcanti † and a Del Caccia had fallen in the dangerous pursuit, stabbed in the streets of Florence. Here then was an enterprise worthy of the new aspirant for fashionable distinction. Perhaps he imagined that two murders committed unavailingly might have induced the Ricci to abandon the task of protecting their kinswoman's fair fame at such a cost. Still more probably he relied on the protection of court favour. In any case he became the known lover of the dangerous widow.

But one night ‡ as he was returning to his home in

* Cigogna. *Ibid.* p. 9. † Litta. *Ibidem.*
‡ See Appendix. Letter I.

the Via Maggio, accompanied by two servants, he was assailed by twelve men at the foot of the Trinity bridge, over the Arno, which he had to pass. One of the servants fled; the other was struck down dead at the first onset. Bonaventuri however succeeded in fighting his way across the bridge, killing one of his assailants, and was near his own house, when he fell, and was dispatched by the daggers of the Ricci bravos.

Such an occurrence in the streets of Florence was very far from rare. An hundred and eighty-six assassinations took place within the city in the first eighteen months after the death of Cosmo.* So the death of the favorite's husband excited but little notice. The murder of Cassandra in her bed on the same night by certain masked men, who entered the chamber and performed the execution as quietly as if it had been a judicial sentence, was more notable. But she had had her two previous warnings; and the "honour" of the Ricci family was thus made safe.

Bianca demanded from the duke vengeance on her husband's murderers; and it was promised. But the measures taken for that purpose were so evidently such as to give the culprits every facility for escape, that public opinion accused Francesco of having been privy to the crime. And it is asserted that he confessed as much to a certain court chaplain,† one Giambattisto Confetti. But if, as seems probable, this was really so, it is difficult to suppose, that Bianca was not equally an accomplice before the fact in the murder. The demand for justice was a matter of course. Not to have made it, would have almost amounted to an avowal of at least approbation of the deed. The com-

* Galluzzi. Istoria del Granducato. Lib. 4, cap. 2.
† Cigogna. *Ibidem.* p. 10.

plete subjection of Francesco's mind to his mistress, makes it exceedingly improbable that he would have connived at such a design without imparting it to her. And the only motive, that either of them could have had for such a crime, beyond the possible wish to get rid of one whose excesses and ill-conduct threw scandal on his connection with the court, must be sought in that promise, which Bianca had extorted from the Duke, to take effect in case they should both be freed from the bonds of marriage. The removal of Bonaventuri, overcame what was likely otherwise to have proved the more insuperable obstacle to this event.

For the unhappy Giovanna, crushed beneath the audacious effrontery of her rival, languishing from the neglect and open indifference of her husband, solitary and apart amid the festivities of a court, whose loose morals were to her Austrian correctness an abomination, and whose recent sovereignty her Austrian pride despised; the mother of daughters only to her husband's great regret, and increased dislike; of unamiable, reserved manners, and of unlovely appearance,—this unhappy Giovanna might very possibly, (even without any assistance from such means as both Francesco and Bianca knew very well how to avail themselves of, if need were,) not continue long to be an obstacle in their way.

Meanwhile the young Princes Ferdinando and Pietro were becoming of an age to exert an influence on the family history and fortunes. Ferdinando the Cardinal, had lived chiefly at Rome. At an early age he had already acquired the reputation of a well educated and well informed man, a dexterous and prudent statesman, and a well-intentioned and respectable prince.

Respectability, though many people are inclined to

deem it a specially British production, is yet now as three hundred years ago far more specially an Italian virtue. No people in the world care so much what is said of them by those around them. It is true that much is respectable there, which would not be able to be respected here. But this is only because all Italian society is more fully and unanimously agreed on considering that seeming is more important than being. With us, respectability must have no chinks nor crannies in its surface, through which peering eyes can discover anything derogatory to its character. But the Italian world declines to peer. Let only a good will to show a fair outside be apparent, and the world will industriously avoid looking beyond that outside. The state will overlook your breaking the laws if you will seem to respect them. The Church does not mind your infidelity if you will make believe to believe. Society will take no notice of your neglect of social duties, if you will not fling your defiance in its face. Break the commandments as much as you will. But observe the "convenances" religiously.

Now Ferdinando was above all a respectable prince, holding an eminently respectable position; and it was his great misfortune to have two brothers, who were both audaciously, though in different degrees, and according to their different natures, the reverse.

Francesco, his elder brother, assuredly did not fail in achieving respectability from any too great openness or sincerity of character. For a more dissembling nature has rarely perhaps existed. His hypocrisy frequently exhibited itself in traits of so strangely profound a kind, as to have the appearance of a hope to deceive either himself or his Creator. For he would practise them upon his own confederates in

crime. Nor was ever any one less indifferent to the estimate his fellows might form of him. The honour of the Medicean name, as he understood the meaning of that phrase, was very dear to him. Yet he made himself the common fable of the courts of Italy. He contrived to earn the contempt of every crowned head in Europe; and was constantly giving rise to that "scandal" which is a respectable Italian's greatest horror. Strong passions, and an obstinate will exaggerated by the possession of absolute power into something at times very like partial insanity, joined to great weakness of all the higher intellectual faculties, and a profound ignorance of the nature, beauty, and value of real worth and nobleness, led him into all this mischief, and were a source of never-ending sorrow and trouble to the Cardinal.

Pietro, the younger brother, was almost an equal thorn in his prudent and respectably ambitious brother's side. His was a nature as unlike as possible to that of either the Duke or the Cardinal; and was not without some indications, that under better circumstances, it might have contained in it the elements of a finer character than either of theirs. As it was, Pietro was an unmitigated and avowed scamp; the centre and leader of all the most profligate young men in the city; the terror of quiet citizens, the insulter of the impotent laws which he braved, the despair of the Cardinal as a disgrace to the family, and the dread of the Duke from his constant and insatiable demands for money.*

Cosmo, the old duke, died in 1574; but before he went, he provided his scape-grace son with a wife,

* Galluzzi. Istoria del Granducato. Lib. 4.—Litta. Famiglia Medici.

after a fashion, which unfortunately had not the effect of reclaiming him from his wild courses. There was living in the court a certain Eleonora di Garzia, a niece of Cosmo's first wife, Eleonora di Toledo. She was pretty, and pleased Cosmo's eye. But being of a noble Spanish family, with interest at the Spanish court, the "convenances" had to be assiduously attended to. So when it appeared one day that Eleonora was likely to become a mother, the exemplary sovereign and excellent father, suddenly struck with the idea that marriage was just the thing to steady his runagate son Pietro, handed over the lady to the young man, and bade him marry her.* Pietro obediently did so; and the lady's "honour," and Cosmo's "honour," and the Toledo family "honour" was all "saved" as bright as ever; which was wholly satisfactory to all those honourable persons. But beyond this very desirable result, the well-imagined arrangement was not found to answer. Pietro led a worse life than ever; and Eleonora had no inclination to be a faithful wife to a husband she rarely saw. But Cosmo went to his grave under the dome of St. Lorenzo, with his honour saved, and left his fatherly management to work to what results it might.

There were thus five ladies belonging to the Medicean family party at the time of Cosmo's death. 1. His widow Camilla Martelli. 2. Francesco's wife, poor Joan of Austria. 3. The gay and dashing widow bewitched, Isabella Orsini. 4. Pietro's neglected but equally gay wife, Eleonora. And, 5. Bianca Capello.

Poor Camilla was very shortly eliminated, being sentenced by the new Grand-duke to perform suttee,

* Litta. *Ibidem.*

by being buried alive in a monastery; where he with inveterate hatred kept her imprisoned during his whole life, notwithstanding the reiterated intercessions of the Cardinal.

The position of his own wife, Giovanna, was not much better. She led a lonely life in her own apartments, treated with all but insult by the courtiers, who lavished on Bianca the homage which follows the dispenser of court favours.

Remained the three younger ladies, the ornaments of Francesco's court, the cynosure of Florentine eyes, the promoters and centre of all festivities, and the devisers of all sorts of diversions and frolic schemes. The general licence of the manners of the time, the high social position of the fair bevy, and the special dissoluteness and neglect of their natural protectors, permitted them to push their sport unchecked very considerably beyond the boundary line, which separates venial levity from conduct that leaves permanent and ineffaceable stains behind it. Isabella had long since "thrown her cap over the roofs," to use the classic French phrase—aye, over the topmost cupola of the *Duomo*. Paolo Giordano Orsini was pursuing his own not very dissimilar course at Rome, and took but little heed of the almost unknown wife, who was off his hands under the care of her own family; and Isabella had ingratiated herself with her brother Francesco in the manner most acceptable to him, by taking kindly to Bianca from the first;* the more so as she was the only one of his family who had ever done so. Pietro's young wife, Eleonora, showed every disposition to follow to the full extent the example he set her. And Bianca, though her doings do not appear to have at

* See Appendix. Letters I. and III.

any time taken such a shape as to give Francesco any cause for jealousy, was ready to go all lengths with the others of the trio as far as lavish extravagance, festivities of which the details were more or less unfit to meet the scrutiny of the public eye, and general "emancipation" from "prejudice," were concerned.

So that the Grand Duke Francesco found himself at the head of a somewhat skittish court; a Capua of the *renaissance*, which was beginning to attract unfavourable notice from the other courts of Italy. When the pot chances to be a shade blacker than usual, the kettle, we know, is ever loudest in abuse of it. Besides, the disorders of the Tuscan court seem to have had a certain Tom-and-Jerry flavour about them, which greatly scandalised and disgusted many Highnesses, Eminences, and Excellencies of different degrees of Illustriousness and Serenity, who would not have minded a few decently veiled assassinations or any amount of respectably quiet poisonings. And Francesco, who flattered himself, very mistakenly, that by dint of a certain dose of Louis-Onze-like devoutness, he had contrived to keep character enough for one, was painfully conscious of the fact that he assuredly had not any to spare for covering the deficiencies of others.

Francesco, moreover, was not a man of a festive disposition. On the contrary, he was almost always under the shadow of a black and unwholesome melancholy. Not that he abstained from excess in many ways. Indeed, all the habits of his life were especially marked by the absence of all moderation. But a savage and ungenial nature showed itself in his pleasures as in his more serious moments. His violence of ill-temper, and sombre suspicious moodiness, must

often have taxed to the utmost all Bianca's powers of dissimulation, and all her forbearance. The lot, which she sacrificed fair fame, peace of mind, and ease of conscience to attain, was one which few would have endured without flinching, had it been awarded to them to bear it. All the contemporary accounts represent Bianca's powers of fascination and persuasion to have been remarkable. And she had need of them all to soothe the ill-governed mind, and calm the half-insane violences of the Grand Duke's savage moods.

These had of late years been growing on him. He had no child to be his heir; and this was a constant source of brooding discontent and melancholy. His wife, Giovanna, had given birth to several infants; but they were all daughters. Bianca had never presented him with a child. To Francesco it was an odious and intolerable thought that either of his brothers should be the successor to his throne. And it was as much a matter of repining to him that Bianca was childless, as that his wife should not have given him an heir. A subsequent marriage legitimises a child born out of wedlock, according to the Romish code. Failing other means, pontifical dispensations were always at hand to help orthodox and Church-loving princes over such difficulties. And Francesco would have deemed a son by Bianca almost as desirable as one by his legitimate wife. But the years went on, and he continued without either.

All this contributed, as may be easily imagined, to make Bianca's task a hard one, and her life a continued series of anxieties, contrivances, plottings, and machinations.

But Francesco had another passion, which led him to look with a discontented eye on the disorders and

excesses of his court,—his avarice. He, like his father, Cosmo, was rich, far beyond what might have been supposed, from his rank and position among the sovereigns of Europe. No mode of extracting money from his subjects was left untried by him. Venal pardons, excessive taxation, and wholesale confiscations, helped to fill his coffers. But he derived still larger revenues from the trading speculations which both he and Cosmo carried on in almost every part of Europe. There was hardly one of the great commercial centres of the time, where the Grand Duke of Florence had not a share in some banking concern. He was also interested as a partner in a great variety of speculations of various kinds. And besides all this he traded largely with ships of his own in grain, wool, pepper and other spices, silk and leather.

The vast wealth thus amassed he used in purchasing by large loans the goodwill and seeming consideration of the courts of Paris and Madrid. In both he was despised and disliked. But both were so accustomed to look upon him as a squeezeable money-dealer, that we find the French court absolutely making jealous complaints* of the amount he had furnished to that of Spain.

All these circumstances combined to make the mood of Francesco dangerous to those about him in the years which immediately followed his father's death. Don Pietro's recklessly scandalous life, and much worse still his constant demands for money, annoyed him. The remonstrances and preachments of the Cardinal Ferdinando from Rome irritated him. But Francesco was perfect as a dissembler. No man or woman was his

* Galluzzi. Istoria del Ducato. Lib. 4.

confidant. Not even to Bianca did he show any sign that his ill-humour was rising to a point above its usual mark.

So the reckless holiday-keeping court circle spun on in their usual course around him. Isabella and Eleonora were busy with their free-lance captains, and court pages. Bianca was hoarding money to send to her greedy family at Venice, or was holding secret council with some philtre-dealer or black-art professor of one sort or another. Pietro was wilder, more lawless, and audacious in his debaucheries than ever. And the highly respectable Ferdinand was anxiously, and almost despairingly, watching them all from Rome, while they were continually throwing down, by the disreputableness of their lives, the edifice of the family greatness, which he was ever laboriously and dexterously scheming to build up.

It must be admitted that his respectable Eminence the Cardinal had enough to provoke and embitter him with his relatives. He and Bianca had from the first been declared enemies. He deplored his brother's weakness in becoming enamoured of this designing Venetian woman. He was indignant at the publicity Francesco had permitted his connection with her to assume. He remonstrated again and again with him on the impropriety of allowing her to have the influence in matters of government which it was notorious she exercised, and on the impolicy of exposing himself to the contempt and ridicule of every court in Europe on her account. But his exhortations had only had the effect of producing a state of enmity between Francesco and himself, which Bianca is accused of having used all her art to perpetuate and envenom.*

* Galluzzi. Istoria del Ducato. Lib. 4, cap. 1.

Such was the state of things in the Medicean domestic circle in the summer of the year 1576; when the working together of all these passions, and all these ill-conditioned and depraved wills culminated in one of those catastrophes which have rendered the name of Medici infamous throughout all time, and made it a beacon to warn off mankind from any approach towards that condition of social system which rendered the production of such hideous phenomena possible.

The Cardinal Ferdinand, though rarely seen in Florence, kept himself accurately and minutely informed of all that passed in his brother's court there. No nunnery wall was scaled by Don Pietro, no masked night excursion planned by Donna Isabella, no assignation made by Donna Eleonora, no secret colloquy held with some scoundrel black-art quack and poison-dealer by Donna Bianca, no fresh outrage on his murmuring subjects committed by the Duke, without speedy and detailed information thereof reaching the much provoked Cardinal in his Roman palace. And whether it so happened, that tidings of some more flagrant indecency than usual had reached his Eminence just then, or whether it were merely that the last drop had made the cup run over, it would seem that Ferdinando—(who, to do him justice, never permitted * his resentment against his brother to stand in the way of his efforts to support the family interest, and to save Francesco from the consequences of his own ill-conduct)—made, about the time mentioned, some communication to the Duke, urging on him the absolute necessity of putting some stop to the scandals caused by the conduct of the ladies of his family.

* Litta. Fam. Med. Art. Ferdinando.—Galluzzi. Lib. 4.

Many similar exhortations had produced no visible effect. But it would appear that the irritating message this time fell on Francesco's moody mind at a dangerous moment. His first step was to send off a summons to Paolo Giordano Orsini at Rome, to come forthwith, and with all secrecy, to Florence.*

Now, when Orsini had left his wife in Florence, he had placed one of his relatives, Troilo Orsini, near her, as a sort of guardian and mentor. Troilo, however, soon became one of Isabella's numerous lovers; and limited the duties of his mentorship to insisting that he should be her only one. But there was a certain court page, one Lelio Torelli, of whom he was especially jealous. And as his efforts to induce Isabella to give up this youth were vain, he performed his duty to his kinsman by running the page through the body. Torelli unfortunately was the son of a man of note, who had been one of Duke Cosmo's chief ministers; and the murder, therefore, could not be easily hushed up or overlooked. Criminal proceedings were instituted against Troilo Orsini, and in the course of them a number of facts were revealed criminatory † of Isabella.

All this Francesco poured into the ear of Paolo Giordano Orsini on his arrival in Florence. No record has reached us of the details of what passed between the Duke and his brother-in-law at the secret colloquy that took place between them on this occasion. But the last words that Francesco uttered, as Orsini left him, were overheard, and have curiously enough been

* Cronaca MS. del Settimanni, cited by Guerazzi in his "Isabella Orsini," p. 177.

† Litta. Fam. Med. Art. Isabella Orsini.

preserved.* "When you have satisfied yourself of the odious truth, remember always that you are a Christian and a gentleman!" said the Duke, who had learned his ideas of either character in the school of Philip II. of Spain. He moreover lent Orsini during his stay in Florence the villa now called Poggio Imperiale, near the Roman gate of the city. To Isabella her husband assumed the appearance of perfect cordiality and affection. He had brought her, he said, a present of a couple of greyhounds, and begged her to accompany him to the villa to try them. It is said that the unhappy woman accepted the invitation with terrible misgivings. She went, however; and the next morning Florence heard that the Lady Isabella had died suddenly in the night; and the court physicians, who were called to look at the body, testified that apoplexy was the cause of her death. The cause of the apoplexy was not stated; but the general belief was, and has been among Florentine historians ever since, that it was brought on by a cord around her neck drawn tightly by the hands of her husband.†

The historians admit that there exists no direct proof that Francesco and Ferdinando, both or either of them, were accomplices in this murder. But they appear to have very little doubt upon the subject; and, indeed, the circumstantial evidence seems almost conclusive, especially as regards Francesco. There is the direct statement of the Settimanni‡ chronicle, that Orsini was sent for from Rome that he might consent to his wife's death. There is the general popular

* MSS. Caponi, cited by Galluzzi. Isa. Orsini, p. 178.

† Galluzzi. Lib. 4, cap. 2.—Litta. Fam. Med. Art. Isabella.—Ademollo. Mari de' Ricci, Notes to, p. 810.

‡ Note 2.

belief at the time and ever since. And there is the fact that both Ferdinando and Francesco continued on perfectly friendly terms with Paolo Giordano after Isabella's death, and interested themselves, as they had not before done, in the settlement of his numerous debts.

The unfortunate Isabella Orsini has been very leniently judged by her countrymen. She was beautiful; carefully and highly educated, so far as the phrase includes exclusively intellectual culture; was a distinguished musician; spoke and wrote correctly several languages, including that of ancient Rome; was a poetess in a small way; and some philological treatise by her, still to be found in print in Italian libraries, indicates that she was not *wholly* given up to pursuits little compatible with intellectual exercise. Impudicity had been from her tender years instilled into her, both by precept and example, by an authority which nature's earliest dictates teach a child to consider as sacred above all others. With such a father and sovereign as Cosmo, and living in such a state of society as that which surrounded her, where the abundant practice of "religious duties" intertwined with, and forming a large part of every-day life, was joined to a degree of ignorance and neglect of "moral duties" unequalled, perhaps, in any other age and country, could Isabella Orsini have been other than lost as she was?

But the reforming hand which was to restore the court and family of the Medici to respectability, was not satisfied with one victim. It was on the 16th of July that Isabella Orsini was murdered; some days having been lost, as may be supposed, between the remonstrance of the Cardinal and the arrival of Paolo Giordano in Florence. The other victim, therefore,

whose destined executioner was at hand, perished exactly one week earlier. When Francesco sent for his brother-in-law from Rome, he also summoned his brother Pietro to an interview.

Here again we have no means of knowing what passed between the brothers, other than such as can be gathered from the facts which followed thereupon, and from the well-known and well-marked characters of the actors. Drawing from these sources of knowledge, Guerrazzi, in his Racconto, entitled "Isabella Orsini," has fashioned forth the dialogue which may be supposed to have passed between them, with a verisimilitude as to circumstances and words, and an absolute truth as to character, so vividly illustrative of the men and the time, that an extract from it will convey more historical truth than many a page from a matter-of-fact chronicle.

Francesco begins by reproaching Don Pietro with his extravagances. "Don Francesco," answers the scapegrace, "Remember that I have come hither on the faith of your safe-conduct. Do not kill me with a sermon."

"Do I deserve this at your hands?" returned the elder, after some further disputing. "Have I not given, and do I not continue to give, proof of my love for my own blood?"

"As for your own, I don't know; but you certainly love blood. . . ."

"I have to tell you then," said Francesco, "that you are the most abject, the most shameless, and most infamous knight that lives this day in Christendom."

"Strong language!" sneered Pietro. "Let us come to facts."

"Your wife is an adulteress."

"I am perfectly well aware of the circumstance."

"What! you know it! and have not avenged your shame!"

"We Medici have never been lucky in our wives."

Francesco, in fury, asks what he means to insinuate against either the Grand Duchess or Bianca. And here the writer commits an error in chronology. For he writes as if this conversation occurred after the death of the Grand Duchess, which was not the fact. The circumstances of this narrative took place in 1576, and the Grand Duchess lived till 1578. As to Bianca; in reply to the Grand Duke's assertion that she must be considered as washed from all that had preceded his connection with her, Pietro retorts:

"Such washing will not remove all stains. Sometimes a piece of the stuff may sooner be destroyed than the spot on it. And on your hand there must be a certain red mark that all Arno cannot wash away. It is the stain of Bonaventuri's blood."

"Who says that I slew Bonaventuri? If my father asserted it, I would tell him that he lied. I neither did nor ordered anything. I can swear it."

"Between ordering, insinuating, foreseeing, suspecting, conniving, not seeing, and so forth, no doubt if the cause had to be tried before this world's judges, the pettifoggers of the courts could find you so many limitations and distinctions that you would be acquitted nem. con. But before God one does not appear by means of one's attorney. . . ."

"Ungrateful! How much have my enemies given you to make me die of anger? Is this a way to speak to your liege lord, who if he would, could break you like a reed. And that, too, when I am intent on preserving your reputation! . . . I have discovered

the infamous destroyer of your honour, and have put him to death."

"Poor fellow! he deserved it, but he was a very worthy cavalier."

"Who told you that he was a cavalier?"

"What! Bernardino Antinori, whom you had strangled in prison! Who told me? Well, that is good! Who told me, indeed? Francesco, let me say a few words to you plainly and openly after my own manner. We can do what we think fit; but on one condition, which is this; that we let others talk as they think fit. The people we employ in matters of this sort are vile and infamous from their birth upwards; and if they could find some one to throw them a bigger sop for murdering us, than we give them for murdering others, they would do so. Do you expect fidelity or secrecy from such? In the taverns and in their low orgies, they vomit forth their secrets of blood, often true, oftener exaggerated twofold, till down there among the people, who know us but little, we find an accumulated hoard of hatred that makes one shudder to look at it."

"Have you done?"

"One minute, and I have done. Add to all this the curse of the pen. . . . . Who knows how many traders are at this hour writing in their ledgers between the records of a purchase of wool, and a sale of silk: *Item.* I record that on such a day in such a year from the Incarnation, Francesco de' Medici caused the Cavaliere Bernardino Antinori to be strangled for adultery with the lady Eleonora di Toledo, wife of Don Pietro dei Medici.* And then, besides the

* These words actually do occur in a book of memoranda of the kind mentioned, which is still extant.

merchants, there are the moralisers, and the history-writers, and all the rest of the literary generation, to whom I make a point of being civil, since we cannot drive them out of the world. . . . . But I see that I am putting you to sleep. You were saying—what was it? Oh! that you had had the Cavaliere Antinori strangled."

Francesco, continues Signor Guerrazzi, who was naturally and habitually sparing of speech, and wont to come directly to his point, felt as if his head was going round with all this flux of words. He needed to recover himself a little; and it was sometime before he resumed his discourse thus.

"Well then, if you know the treason of your wife, why is she still alive?"

"Because, if I come to my *confiteor*, I fancy that I have more sins on my shoulders than she has; and, further, because I do not see clearly who would save me from the vengeance of her uncle the Duke of Alva, and her brother Toledo, who, between ourselves, are not altogether saints to have to deal with."

"And can we not protect you against a viceroy and a duke.

"In short, you want me to make you a present of the life of Eleonora; and I am willing to do so. A wife is not worth falling out about. But you on your part must be a good brother . . . . and let me have some forty thousand ducats, that I am sadly in want of."

"All of you eaten up with debt! All out at elbows! You, the Cardinal, and Orsini would swallow all Peru. Where am I to get all this money?"

"A squeeze well administered to the udders of the Republic would put all to rights. But you have no

need even to do that. Rumour says, that what with gold in coin and in ingots, and in precious stones, you have hoarded better than ten millions of money. . . . Besides, the public revenue, after all expenses are paid, gives you more than three hundred thousand ducats."

"And who dares to call me to account as to the amount?"

"You had better hang the multiplication table. Then, again, you make a mine of money by your commerce in leather, precious stones, grain, and pepper."

"Losses upon all of them! I have made up my mind to give up commerce. Perhaps,—I have not quite made up my mind,—perhaps I may continue to trade in pepper. But no more leather!—no more grain! He who trades in grain dies on straw."

"Do as you think best. But will you give me the forty thousand ducats?"

"Good heaven! where can you get rid of so much money?"

"Give it to me, and be sure that in so doing you lay it out well. I employ it in making you friends. I spend it among the people in festivities, in banquets, in pleasure. The rising generation is thus habituated to expense and luxury. I enervate it to your hand; I degrade it; I emasculate its intellect; I destroy its dignity of mind and its strength of body. I prepare it to receive the seed; so that you may sow it with what best suits your purpose."

"In truth, your humour is of a strange turn! You shall have the forty thousand ducats. But you will sign me an obligation to repay them little by little from your Pisan property."

"As for obligations, I will sign you as many as you please."

"Moreover——"

"Oh dear me! now come the restrictions!"

"No! only you will undertake the removal of your infamous wife when and where I shall command."

"This article is also agreed to. When am I to have the ducats?"

"To-morrow!

And in accordance with the characteristic scene thus painted for us by Signor Guerrazzi, we find on returning from verisimilitude to recorded fact, that on the ninth of July in the year 1576, just a week previous to the murder of Isabella Orsini, the wretched Eleonora, —she too another victim of Cosmo's atrocious profligacy—was put to death by Don Pietro's own hand at the Villa of Cafaggiuolo. That ill-omened place is a castle among the Apennines, some fifteen or twenty miles from Florence, which the traveller thence to Bologna will hardly fail to notice. Solitary and desolate as it stands now among the mountains by the side of the high-road, it was yet more so, when no such road existed. The dark naked stone tower standing there on the hill-side turf, without tree or cultivation near it of any kind, strikes the imagination as the very spot adapted for such a crime.

Of course, as usual, there were medical declarations of the cause of her death, and the courts were duly informed that God had pleased to take to himself our dearly beloved sister-in-law, &c. But it is remarkable that to his agent at the court of Philip II., Francesco wrote a private letter, which is still extant,* ordering

* Printed by Galuzzi. Lib. 4. ch. 2.

him to communicate the whole truth of the murder to that monarch. And Philip, while expressing regret for the cause of the crime, manifested no disapproval of it, and promised all secrecy concerning it.

It is recorded, that Don Pietro immediately after the perpetration of the deed, with hands yet bloody from the task, took the precaution of imploring pardon for it, from a figure of the Virgin Mary in an adjoining chapel, promising at the same time, that as an expiation he would thenceforth remain single;—a vow which he did not keep.

Thus were decency and respectability restored, it was hoped, to the court life at Florence. Bianca's sins, as has been intimated, were of a different kind, from those of the two murdered princesses. But Francesco's gloomy temper and fits of violence, joined to such an example of his mode of action when irritated, could not have been re-assuring to the survivor of the trio court beauties.

CHAPTER III.

Bianca balances her accounts.—Dangers in her path.—A bold step—and its consequences.—Facilis descensus.—A proud father.—Bianca's witchcraft.—The Cardinal is checkmated, for this game.

But whatever other effect the untimely deaths of these two unfortunate women may have produced, they had not that of removing the gloom from the brow of Francesco. Surely, indeed, if he is to be considered human, and in any degree sane, it may be thought, that such events must have contributed no little to increase the irritability of his temper, and the sudden melancholy, ever and anon bursting out into savageness. It is likely enough that Francesco's education at the Court of Spain, the obsequious casuistry of his own theologians, and the total absence from cradle to grave of any one wholesome moral influence, of any one ray of light to dissipate, however fitfully, the thick darkness of an ignorance of right and wrong far deeper, more dangerous, and more perverse than that of a savage;—it is possible enough, that all this may have enabled him to say to his own heart, when kneeling at the feet of his most favourite idol, that his act had not made him guilty within the limitations of God's statute law, and the intricate modifications of it made by subsequent legislation, in such and such acts of such and such a year of this or the other Pope's reign.

Still, assure himself of this as he might, and fortify

the assurance by whatsoever most satisfactory "case," drawn up by the shrewdest sacerdotal pettifogger who ever discovered a flaw in heaven's eternal ordinances, it may be fancied that he did not sleep better of nights after that July, 1576, and that Bianca's position and task were not improved by what had happened.

Some thirty years or so ago, a Florentine publisher, happening to have become possessed of the house which once belonged to Bianca, in the Via Maggio, conceived the idea of pretending to have found concealed in a wall therein a MS. containing her autobiography. A prefatory notice stated, that unfortunately the chemical means used for restoring the faded characters to legibility had had the effect of entirely destroying them, so that the finder of these precious papers could not have the satisfaction he had hoped of showing them to persons interested in such matters! The forgery was an impudent and ridiculously ill-executed one. A very superficial knowledge of the language sufficed to convince any reader of the first two pages of the silly catch-penny trash, that the phraseology was of the nineteeth and not the sixteenth century, even had the tone of the narrative been at all assorted to the character of the supposed writer.

But what a treat would such a find be, were it genuine! What a psychological treasure would be a peep into the real feelings of such a mind and heart! Did Bianca consider her career to be a triumphant one, successfully achieving the "excelsior" of her ideal by painful but victorious struggle with opposing fortune? Or did she look on herself as the victim of a chain of unfortunate circumstances, entangled in the meshes of a destiny, which drew her fatally on, and irresistibly wrapped its darkening clouds around her. Few

recorded careers illustrate so exactly, regularly, and undeviatingly the lessons of the moralist as that of Bianca. No invented story of progress from bad to worse can better exemplify the law that compels evil to generate ever new evil.

Thus far, supposing her not to have been guilty of her husband's murder, her ill-doings have not been such as to put her beyond the pale of human sympathies. She fled from a home made unhappy by a negligent father and an unkind step-mother.* It was ill-done. Deceived by her husband as to his position in the world, finding herself a prisoner in a miserable cottage, where she was obliged to do the work of a servant (because the poverty of her husband's family was such, that when she was brought home to be fed and lodged, the drudge hitherto kept by them could be no longer fed or lodged),† she listened to the seduction of a prince, and left a husband who was perfectly contented with the arrangement. This was worse; yet far from unpardonable.

But now a career of darker crime had to be entered on. Bianca was now the inmate of a court. Virtues and vices there are on a larger scale. "Major rerum nascitur ordo." The interests and passions of despotic princes are dangerous matters to meddle with, mostly leaving stains and scars on the hands and hearts of those concerned in ministering to them. Enough of both, one would think, must have fallen to Bianca's lot.

Let us see, then, if we can succeed in looking into her mind, as it must at this period have contemplated her position, taking stock of the gains and losses thus far realised.

* Litta. Fam. Med. Art. Bianca.
† Ademollo. Mar. de Rieci. Notes, p. 628.

"To exercise the most powerful influence in a splendid court; to receive daily homage, and something more solid than homage, from all who have favours to ask, justice to seek, or injustice to pay for; to dispense promotions, reward friends and crush enemies; all this is worth something. To be the courted patroness of the relatives who so loudly complained of my having disgraced them, to dispense my bounty to the father and brother who denounced me, and to be the means of sustaining and advancing the grandeur of the family whose daughter I am; all this is worth still more. To become, what, if fate do not play me false, I will become, and make the Ten themselves bow before the poor outlawed exile! Ay, that indeed would be more again. It is something, too, by the blaze of my beauty and the glitter of my magnificence, to thrust back that pale, proud Austrian woman into cold obscurity. She, indeed, to think of being a wife to Francesco! She to dream of taking in charge such a nature as his! She to attempt the task of comprehending, sympathising with, soothing, managing, ay, and mastering those surging passions, that wilful mind, and fitful heart! She! It is a part cast, methinks, for an actress of other powers than hers! But what if it should prove too difficult for my own? She, indeed, is at least secure in the frozen dignity of her place. She is the Grand Duchess, and needs to practise no such ruling of the storms to hold her safe position. But for me! To rule them, or to perish in them, is the only alternative. If I cease to rule but for a day, I fall, and am crushed into the dust! That is the condition on which I hold my place in Florence! And the Saints know how many waking nights and anxious days the holding of it thus far has cost me! And the

task seems growing from day to day more arduous. The Duke's deepening melancholy and discontent at his childlessness is dangerous—very dangerous. May he not seek elsewhere for that which I have failed to give him! Francesco loves me;—I think he loves me;—that is, he has need of me. But should some more painfully felt need require that I should be sacrificed, trampled into dust, burned at the stake, torn limb from limb; my Francesco's love, methinks, would hardly save me. Had I but a child, could I but be the mother of a son to stand between him and the Cardinal, I should, I think, be safe!"

Somewhat to this tune, we may suppose, Bianca's ruminations must have often run during the early months of that fatal summer of 1576; till at length the urgency of the case, arising from the Duke's increasing gloom and discontent, determined her to adopt the dangerous expedient of counterfeiting the maternity which nature denied her.

From the earliest years of her connection with Francesco, it had been her earnest wish to present him with a son. And when, as time ran on, it began to appear unlikely that she should do so, she left none of the means untried, to which the gross ignorance and superstition of the time attributed the power of removing sterility. With this view, she had constantly about her a number of the vilest vagabonds, impostors, philtre-dealers, necromancers, poison-concoctors, spell-mongers, and quack-doctors in Europe. In all probability she practised with love-philtres, to secure her ascendancy over the Duke. It may have been, also, that she had occasion to dabble in the secrets of the professors of the art of poisoning. But the grand object of her medico-witchcraft was to become a

mother. And it is exceedingly likely, that some of the means used for this purpose may have actively contributed to defeat the end in view, and have done much to injure her health permanently, as we find hinted in the writings of the historians.*

The people, whom these schemes and pursuits had brought her into connection with, were well calculated to serve as agents in the fraud now contemplated. The first necessary step was to find a mother, who could be induced to agree to part with her infant, when it should be born. But as the great object of Bianca's ambition was to present the Duke with a son, it was necessary to provide, as far as possible, against uncertainty on this point. For this purpose three women were found, who expected their confinement, as nearly as could be calculated, at the same time; and who all consented for money to give up their child, in case it should prove to be a male. But it was further very necessary to the safety of all concerned in the business, that these women should be ignorant that a similar bargain had been made with others. Care had therefore to be taken that they should be located in different quarters of the city, and should have no means of corresponding with any one.

All these arrangements must evidently have required the co-operation of no inconsiderable number of agents. But it is probable that one or two of these only were allowed to know on whose behalf they were acting.

At length all these preparations were made, and the 29th of August, 1576, was fixed on among the confederates for the consummation of the plan. Bianca played her part accordingly to perfection. Of course

* Galluzzi. Ist. del Gr. ducato. Lib. 4, c. 2.

her fictitious labour would have to endure, till the genuine labour of whichever of the three unfortunate mothers should first produce a son, should have come to an end. One only of the three had a male child; and this was immediately conveyed, in a mandoline, say the chronicles of the time, to Bianca's residence.

But it was yet further necessary, before the innocent object of all this roguery could be allowed to appear upon the scene, that Bianca should find the means of clearing her chamber of inconvenient witnesses. And this was not altogether easy. For the Grand Duke, whose rejoicing at the coming event had been excessive, insisted on being himself present at the birth; and it was impossible to get him out of the chamber. The only possibility of success lay in the chance of tiring him out. And Bianca did her best to render the witnessing of her pangs as disagreeable as possible. But Francesco's sensibilities were not to be worked on in this manner. Let Bianca play her part to the life, as she would, Francesco patiently awaited the result. The long hours of the night wore on. Morning was at hand. Bianca's lamentable groaning, kept up with admirable constancy in spite of no little fatigue from her night's performance, became tedious, if not heart-rending to the princely watcher. He was very sleepy; the women, with grave shakings of the head, feared that the patient would have to suffer some hours yet; and at last his Highness, as morning was breaking, gave in, and went off to his bed; leaving however some trusted minister in his stead to await the happy moment, and give him the earliest intelligence thereof.

The game was now an easy one. Some message to the Duke, or other such commission was readily found to send away the deputy-watcher; and then in a few

minutes all was in order for the reception of Francesco, who hurried from his bed to delight himself with the sight of the son he had so long and so earnestly wished for. All passed with the most perfect success. No shadow of a suspicion seems to have arisen in the Grand Ducal mind. He immediately recognised the child formally as his own; ordered that he should be considered a member of the House of Medici; and received the congratulations of the court and city, as if an heir to the throne had been legitimately born. The child was christened Antonio, because, according to the pious declaration of Bianca, it was to the intercession of St. Anthony that the favour of so great a blessing was due.*

But the ridiculous side of this ignoble farce lies in too close proximity to its tragic developments, to suffer that a smile should for more than a passing moment replace the horror and reprobation which are the standing moods of mind for the study of Medicean annals. Bianca's triumph was complete for the moment. But on how many chances might the continuance of it hang? How many of the most worthless beings had it in their power to hurl her, with a word, from the height of her success! Was she then never again to be free from perpetual terrors? Never to lose for an hour the consciousness, that a random word, if not an intentional and purchased betrayal, the repentance of a confederate, or a death-bed confession might at any time suffice to throw down the whole fabric built up with so much care, pain, and cost of guilt; nay, might bring on her the same swift and sudden vengeance which had overtaken the unhappy Isabella

* Galluzzi. Ist: del Gr. ducato. Lib. 4. ch. 2.

and Eleonora! Was there *no* mode of escaping from so hideous a thraldom?

Then again it was to be remembered that eyes and brains of a quality very difficult to be eluded or deceived would leave no means untried to ascertain the truth respecting this timely maternity after so many years of sterility. The Cardinal was hardly likely to attribute much efficacy to the intercession of St. Anthony. And who in Florence could at any time feel sure that they were not at that very moment under his special surveillance? Then again Don Pietro, equally injured and enraged with his brother Ferdinando at this suddenly produced Medici! his haunts and habits were such as to make it anything but unlikely that he might stumble on the traces of the deception that had been practised.

The Duchess, most nearly and cruelly injured of all! Pshaw! if she were all, there could be small cause for alarm.

Was there *no* way of escaping once and for ever from these haunting torments; escaping once for all from fears and from plots and conspiracies, and all underhand dealings and living honestly and uprightly thenceforward? The safety, the happiness of such a freedom, the possibility of carrying out such virtuous aspirations must be found.

Is there *no* way?

There is but one way, Bianca thinks, as she spends the hours of the pretended convalescence in no pleasing meditations on her position;—but *one* way.

> "She must—she must;—she will—she will,
> Spill much more blood; and become worse
> To make her title good!"

The thought once admitted, delay in the execution

of it only risked the possibility of doing the deed in vain. The greatest danger was to be apprehended of course from the three mothers; inasmuch, as the mere fact of the bargain made with them, joined to the exact date of their confinement, would have been sufficient to raise a presumption which it would have been easy to improve into certain proof of the real truth.

Two of these women therefore were put to death by disguised assassins; the third, having obtained some warning of her danger, escaped out of Tuscany.

But the chief manager of the whole plot had been a Bolognese woman, in whom Bianca placed implicit confidence. Still she could not feel safe as long as it was in any human being's power to betray her. This woman was therefore sent back to Bologna; or rather, the doomed creature was made to believe that such was her destination. But as she and her escort were crossing the Apennine, winding in single file along the deep-cut bridle paths that threaded the chesnut woods, a shot from behind a tree brought her to the ground. The assassins thought that their work was done more thoroughly than was the case. The wound indeed was mortal; but the unfortunate woman lived long enough to reach Bologna, and there, being juridically examined, she confessed at length the whole of the plot by which Bianca had foisted a suppositious child on the Grand Duke, together with all details of the execution of the fraud.

This confession, duly attested by the authorities at Bologna, was forwarded to the Cardinal Ferdinando at Rome, and his feelings on receiving it may easily be imagined. He must have thought that he had at last in his hand the means of crushing the hated Venetian

woman, whose arts and spells had so enthralled his brother as to disgrace him throughout Europe, and by whose infamous practices it seemed but too probable that some base-born brat might be placed on the throne of Tuscany to his nefarious exclusion. What then was his indignation and disgust, when on hastening to lay before his brother the irrecusable proof, as he supposed, of his mistress's foul treason and falsehood, he found him obstinately determined neither to hear, see, nor give credence to anything on the subject! The power and credit of Bianca were greater than ever. A magnificent appanage was settled upon the child Antonio, whom the Duke persisted, in spite of all evidence upon the subject, in considering and treating as his son. He was called Don Antonio dei Medici; and Francesco appeared to lavish on the infant all a father's affection.

It must be admitted that there was wherewithal to embitter a milder-minded man than the Cardinal. All the calculating policy which had enabled his cautious nature to dissemble his disgusts for so many years, so far as to avoid an open rupture with his brother, could not prevent him now from speaking in a manner that for a time produced a total estrangement between him and the Grand Duke. Such deplorable blindness and imbecility as that manifested by Francesco, could only have been produced, it was said, by the use of infernal arts, and drugs of maleficent power. The belief in the efficacy of such agencies was general. It is therefore extremely probable, that the Cardinal himself may have supposed Francesco to have been bewitched in the literal sense of the word. That Bianca was credited with extensive powers of the kind by the popular opinion of Florence is certain. And it is

equally clear, that she herself, whatever may have been her private opinion of her own proficiency in the art, believed in its existence and potency, was continually dabbling in the secrets of its professors, and would fain have been a witch, if she could have found out how to become one.

But the real witchery that Bianca had on this occasion practised on her lover was not suspected by the Cardinal; though, as it would seem from subsequent events, he must have become aware of it later. It was the common witchery of a strong and unscrupulous mind over a weak one, whose only force was the strength of the bad passions that stirred it. But the spell used to evoke the demon that should give her the victory in this perilous crisis of her fortunes was one of extraordinary daring. And it was strikingly characteristic of the woman, and curiously indicated how thoroughly she had studied the nature of the man she had to practise on, and how securely she reckoned on the aid of the evil spirit she had summoned from the dark depths of his own heart, in the form of his jealous hatred of his brothers, and of the thought that either of them should be his successor.

The bungling work of the bravo sent to make all safe by dispatching the woman on the Apennines on her way to Bologna, which had allowed her to reach that city alive, left small doubt on Bianca's mind, that the whole story of Antonio's birth would soon become known to those from whom it was most necessary that it should be kept secret.

The danger was a tremendous one. No philtres nor drug practice would serve the turn now. But a bold stroke of a more truly black art might do so. Now to raise a devil potent enough to make wrong triumphant

over all right and truth! Bianca knew that such a devil was within call, and went bravely about the work.

Reminding Francesco skilfully of all that he had suffered from being childless, subtly painting the triumph and rejoicing of his brothers at this his bitter misfortune, and picturing to him as subtly the downfal of their hopes in consequence of the birth of Antonio; when she had made the idea of relinquishing this vantage ground sufficiently intolerable to his feelings, she audaciously * narrated to him the whole truth of her fictitious confinement, and Antonio's real birth. To have had recourse to such an expedient was too evidently the sole means of remedying the evil. To have deceived him in the matter was to save his dignity, his conscience, to take upon herself all the odium, the risk, the burthen, the sin,—if sin there were in securing the peace of mind and happiness of her sovereign and lord. What but devotion to him, his wishes and his interests, could have stimulated her to adopt, at her own peril, the only possible means of abating the insolent triumph of the disloyal brothers, who were rejoicing in his misfortunes!

The incantation worked well. The devil was evoked. Francesco could not endure the idea of returning to the state of jealous misery in which he had lived before Antonio's birth; above all could not endure the thought of admitting to his prudent preaching brother that he had been ignominiously and ridiculously cheated; that his loud triumph had been premature; that the Cardinal's warnings and denunciations of Bianca had all been wise and just; and that now he—the Cardinal

* Galluzzi. *Ibid.* Lib. 4, ch. 3.

—must again step back into the position of the childless brother's heir. No! all this was not to be thought of. Bianca was—not pardoned—but blessed, as his best friend and helpmate. And the Grand Duke was thenceforward an accomplice in the fraud of substituting a false heir.

Ferdinando, with his triumphant proofs in his hand, was met, as has been told, with well-assumed impenetrable incredulity. He found the Grand Duke busy arranging the purchase of a principality in the kingdom of Naples for two hundred thousand ducats, to be settled on his darling child. And the dexterous, diplomatic, able Cardinal, had to return to Rome baffled and checkmated by a woman.

CHAPTER IV.

The Duchess Giovanna and her sorrows.—An heir is born.—Bianca in the shade—The "Orti Oricellari."—Bianca entertains the Court there.—A summer night's amusement in 1577.—The death of Giovanna.

THE conduct of the Grand Duke in neglecting his wife, a daughter of the proud house of Austria, while he abandoned himself to the seductions of a comparatively low-born adventuress, had not failed to expose him to urgent and very disagreeable remonstrances from the family of the Duchess. At the death of her brother Maximilian, negotiations were pending between the Imperial Court and that of Tuscany on two subjects. The first had reference to the full execution of the Imperial diplomas and decrees, which had conferred on the Grand Duke precedence over the other princes of Italy. This had never been admitted by them, especially by the house of Este. And Francesco ceased not to clamour for the due recognition of his rank. The other matter concerned the position of the Grand Duchess Giovanna. Rodolph, Maximilian's successor in the Empire, was anxious to remain on good terms with Francesco. And one of his first cares was to send an ambassador to Florence for the purpose of arranging these matters amicably.

The grounds of complaint against the Grand Duke on the part of Giovanna were sufficiently well founded.

But she seems to have brought forward one accusation, from which her husband was able to defend himself satisfactorily. She complained that the pecuniary means allowed her were most insufficient; and that the mortifications to which she was thus exposed, were embittered by the lavish expenditure permitted to the vile woman for whose sake her husband neglected her. Now the truth was, that Giovanna was herself inordinately extravagant. It was easy for her to show that she had been driven to pledge her jewels and other valuables by need of money. But the Imperial lady did not seem to be aware that any limits ought to be placed to her power of disbursing. Living, as she did, wholly in a little court of her own Germans, her principal pleasure seems to have consisted in enriching them. And Francesco was able to show the Imperial ambassadors that if Giovanna was in debt, it was because she had spent more than the abundant income allowed her. As usual in all disputes, the Grand Duchess, by being wrong in this one point, made it the more difficult for her friends to insist upon right being done her in regard to those other matters, concerning which her complaints were clearly just.

However, a certain amount of reconciliation was brought about between her and Francesco; and what contributed far more than the exhortations of the Imperial Court, to make it for the moment genuine, was the birth of a son in 1577. This event was to the Grand Duke a subject of infinite rejoicing, and to Bianca a proportionably great humiliation. She found herself obliged to withdraw into perfect retirement, and ever to leave Florence for awhile. The immense difference in her position, which was felt by herself and all Florence to result from the birth of this legiti-

mate heir to the Duchy, is a measure of the importance of the fraudulent introduction of Don Antonio, and of the probability felt by all parties that means would have been found to secure for him the succession to the throne.

Philip II. of Spain graciously acceded to the Grand Duke's request that he would be godfather to Giovanna's child; and it was accordingly named after him.

During the first flush of the Grand Duke's triumph and rejoicing at the birth of his son, Bianca remained prudently in perfect retirement; and Giovanna flattered herself that she should at last hold the place in her husband's affections and in his court which were her due. But the hold that Bianca had established on Francesco's mind was too strong for him to be able to free himself from it. The need of her had become habitual to him, as is ever the case in associations between a weak character and a strong one. The illusions of poor Giovanna lasted but a very short time. Even the interest attaching to her boy, important as he was to the fortunes of the house of Medici, could not avail to prevent Bianca's re-appearance on the scene.

She returned to Florence, and soon found means of showing, by the accumulated marks of the Grand Duke's munificence towards her and her son, that the Florentines were mistaken if they had imagined that her reign was over.

One of the most notable, and it may be said, one of the most scandalous, manifestations of this renewed favour, was the gift of a palace and gardens in Florence, which had already acquired an historical celebrity of a widely different kind from that which was now to be

added to it as the scene of many of Bianca's more or less disreputable orgies.

The property in question has since that time passed through several hands, and the traveller who has visited Florence will be most likely to remember it by the name of its last proprietor, as the Palazzo Strozzi. He will probably not have forgotten the large gardens which stretch behind it, and which through all changes have kept their original name, being still known as the "Orti Oricellari." These gardens, with the dwelling attached to them, were in the latter years of the fifteenth century the property of Giorgio Rucellai, the celebrated philosopher and historian. The house was then a "casino," belonging to the gardens, instead of being, as it now is, a palace, to which they are an appendage. And the writers of the time, who have frequently spoken of them, call them a "selva;" so that we must picture the place to our imaginations as very different from the trim garden which we now see.

It was to this spot that Lorenzo the Magnificent's Platonic Academy moved its sittings at his death in 1492. It was there that the brothers Palla and Giovanni Rucellai, sons of Giorgio, received Leo X.* when he came to Florence in 1515, and performed before him Giovanni's tragedy of "Rosmunda," composed in imitation of the Hecuba of Euripides,—one of the first, if not perhaps the first, tragic representation in Italy. It was there, too, that as times grew worse in Florence, and the minds of good citizens had to occupy themselves with matters more grave than Platonic philosophy and tragedies in imitation of Euripides, Macchiavelli read those discourses on the

* Osservatore Fiorentino. Tom. 3, p. 106.

first Decade of Livy, which were so well calculated to rouse a spirit of patriotism, with which the author himself seems to have sympathised so imperfectly. It was there, also, that these readings bore their fruit in that unsuccessful conspiracy against the Cardinal Giulio, afterwards Clement VII., for which Jacopo da Diaceto lost his head; and in consequence of which the Academy was extinguished, and its members dispersed. In these gardens, also, Macchiavelli laid the scene of his dialogue on the Art of War. He describes the thickness and vast height of the trees,* several of which were of kinds unknown to Fabrizio Colonna, who is one of the interlocutors in the dialogue. He commemorates the extraordinary freshness of the herbage, the retired tranquillity and sylvan beauty of the spot, enclosed as it was within the buildings of a walled city; and speaks of this style of culture, contrasted with that which we call Italian gardening, as the ancient manner of cultivation.

And now this pleasant place, which was on so many accounts classical ground to the Florentines, was made the harbour of the very different sort of "Academy," which Bianca assembled around her, and the principal scene of their fooleries—to use a charitable term.

The details of one such night's amusement have been preserved by the contemporary novelist, Celio Malespini,† who is well known to have drawn all his materials from real history, and whose book may be accepted as a perfectly accurate and trustworthy picture of the manners of the time. Bianca's brother, Vittorio Cappello, was expected to arrive in Florence with other Venetian gentlemen, and the diversion in question was

* Machiavelli. Op. Ed. Italia, 1813. V. iv. p. 194.
† Malespini. Novelli. Par. 2, nov. 24.

prepared for their especial delectation. The Grand Duke, however, appears to have taken his full share in the performances.

There was at that time, we are told, a necromancer at Florence, who was one of the most powerful performers in his profession. The garden had been placed by Bianca at his disposition, and the sovereign and court were invited by her to disport themselves as follows.

"When the hour was come, the Grand Duke and his companions repaired to the garden and walked in the shade, waiting till the necromancer should have completed his preparations. At last he came forth clad in a most extraordinary manner, but quite in keeping with his character. On his head was a mitre covered with pentagons and all sorts of extravagant figures, so that he appeared a veritable new Zoroaster. With slow and stately steps he advanced to a spot prepared for the purpose, and there drew a circle on the sward with a knife. This circle corresponded in size with a cavity which had previously been prepared beneath the surface of the soil; and around he drew with the knife a quantity of mystic signs, which, however, nobody saw, inasmuch as the place was all covered with herbage. But this was done," says the shrewd Malespini merely for appearance sake,—'*per dare colore all' arrosto.*' "This done, he fenced the circle around with a piece of a ship's cable, leaving a narrow entrance, at which was placed a moderate sized bell. On the right hand were two large brasiers filled with burning coals; and on the left a filbert wand, and a vase full of drugs for fumigations. When all this was arranged, he brought the Grand Duke and the rest within the circle, imposing on them silence with solemn

gestures; and then requested that one among them would stand forward and assist him in doing what was needed, assuring them, very seriously, that no harm should happen to him."

"At this Signor Sansonetto d'Avernia at once stepped forward and offered himself. The necromancer made him take off his shoes, and caused all the others to lay aside their arms. He then placed Sansonetto between the two brasiers, with the knife in one hand, which had been previously used for the formation of the circle, and in his other the filbert rod, which he directed him to hold stretched forth threateningly, while he stood erect and drawn up to his full height. Now Sansonetto was a very tall man, and extremely corpulent withal, with a very red face, like another Bacchus. So that the Grand Duke, seeing him standing there barefoot, with the knife raised in the air, and the brasiers on either side of him, could not forbear laughing, in which the necromancer had much ado not to join."

"When due gravity had been restored, the Grand Duke was placed in the centre, on a black velvet cushion, and all the others around the circle. All having taken their seats, the necromancer turning to the east, uttered a very loud whistle, and repeated the same towards the north, the south, and the west. It was now an hour and a half after sunset, and quite dark, so that the scene was visible only by the lurid light of the brasiers, which much favoured the effect intended to be produced. The wizard then took the bell, and ringing it loud and long, cried, 'Come hither! come hither! all spirits who owe me obedience!' And turning to the north he called 'Bardicul! Stuflogor! Solsibec! Graffaril! Tarmidar! Zampir! and Borgamur!' And when he had called

these ridiculous names, which were the first (says Malespini, who seems rather an *esprit fort*) that came into his mouth, he turned to Sansonetto, and bade him throw the drugs on the braziers. These drugs were compounded of assafœtida, pitch, sulphur, and other stinking and abominable ingredients, and the wizard's intention was, that a small portion only should be thrown on the coals. But poor Sansonetto, in his zeal, threw such a quantity into the braziers, and raised so dreadful and fœtid a smoke, that all had to hold their noses, and it was almost impossible to endure it. The dreadful stench filled all the garden, and reached the nostrils of the lady Bianca, who, with some of her most intimate friends, was placed so that they could see all the sport without being seen. The necromancer perceiving, therefore, that Sansonetto had overdone the thing, and that the Grand Duke could hardly bear the stench and the smoke, judged it best to hasten to the catastrophe of his performance, instead of prolonging it by various other ceremonies, as he had intended. So he gave a concerted sign by thrice clapping his hands; whereupon the devils (concealed beneath the apparently unmoved surface of the soil) began to make such noises and thunderings, that one might have thought the end of the world was at hand, and the infernal regions opening beneath their feet. Dreadful cries and lamentations, strange howlings, gnashing of teeth, clanking of chains, sighs and groans, were heard; and innumerable flames of fire burst forth from holes made in the earth, so that the grass was burned by them. In truth, to anybody not in the secret, the scene must have been," thinks Malespini, "shocking and terrible in no small degree."

"And, indeed, when the party heard all this horrible

tumult, many, I promise you, were frightened enough, and thought no more of the stinking smoke in their alarm. Then the necromancer thought it time to bring about his catastrophe. Stamping with his foot therefore, he gave the sign agreed on for the letting go the chains that supported over the pit beneath the platform with the soil and grass on which they were all sitting. The brasiers and the knife were dexterously removed outside the circle by the necomancer. But the whole of the party were precipitated pell-mell one over the other into the pit; much of the earth and sods which had been ranged on the platform falling on the top of them. If the previous circumstances had frightened them, let anybody judge," says our chronicler, "how much more they were terrified now, finding themselves all precipitated, with the Grand Duke in the midst, into the bowels of the earth. In short there was not one of them, as they afterwards confessed, who did not firmly believe that they had looked their last on the light of the sun."

"No sooner had they fallen thus into the pit, than the devils were upon them, making noises more horrible than before, and looking fearfully hideous in the lurid light of the flames that continually blazed forth. So that in truth the poor fellows were beside themselves with terror, and hardly knew if they were alive or dead."

"When they were thus in an agony of alarm and distress, there suddenly appeared a number of beautiful girls, who in some degree mitigated the stink of the smoke by delicious odours that they brought with them. Taking the Grand Duke and the others by the hand, they led them out of the horrible pit, comforting them," writes Malespini, "with amorous gestures and pleasing

manners, and conducted them to the arcades that were in the garden. There they were restored by the exquisite odour which proceeded from a large golden lamp, that cast a soft light over all the arcade. And while they were admiring these beauties, who were," as the author somewhat contradictorily writes, "all naked, with gold brocaded mantles magnificently adorned with precious stones, the music of various instruments was heard, and angelic and divine voices carolled forth the words of certain hymns appropriate to the matter in hand. So that it really appeared to all present, that the whole hierarchy of paradise was there assembled. When the Grand Duke and his companions looked about them and saw a magnificently arranged banquet, with beautiful fruits of every kind, they could not but think themselves in the Elysian fields. Then the nymphs with infinite grace and charm of manner pressed them to rest and repose themselves; and the Grand Duke pretended (observe), to recover himself and collect his senses after so great an astonishment; and said to his companions, the Count Santafiora, the two Strozzi, and Altoviti, 'Let the meaning of all this be what it may, I think, for my part, that all these good things are not to be despised, and still less so these charming and amiable ladies.'"

"As for the others of the party, they had remained in the pit half dead, lying there insensible, till they were carried to beds prepared for the purpose, where they were properly attended by medical men provided for that end."

"As soon as the Grand Duke had spoken as above, a voice was heard to sing an ode," duly recorded by Malespini, but which the reader may be spared, in which the flattery of his highness is piled as only

Italian hyperbole can pile it. "Meantime, the beautiful and elegant girls," says the writer, "among whom was one of exceeding loveliness, named Milla Capraia, did not cease to caress those noble knights; till suddenly another strophe was heard beginning 'Depart, oh noble heroes!' &c., and so the diversion came to a conclusion."

Such, considerably abridged, is the account of Bianca's mode of entertaining her guests among the classic shades where Lorenzo's Platonists had speculated, and Macchiavelli had stirred the patriotism of the last free sons of Florence.

It is perhaps worth remarking, that the words to which the readers attention was called,—"the Grand Duke *pretended* to recover himself"—seem to show, that *he* was in the secret of the performances all the time; and that the zest of the joke consisted in frightening the silly courtiers out of their wits, while their magnanimous sovereign should enjoy their discomfiture, himself *seeming* to be superior to all such terrors; and should be worshipped as a hero on the strength thereof by Miss Milla Capraia, who was to *seem* to put perfect faith in his heroism.

But while Bianca and the Grand Duke and the court were thus amusing themselves, a very different scene was passing in that corner of the huge pile of the Pitti palace, which contained the private apartments of the Duchess. At first the birth of her son had been a matter of immense rejoicing and triumph to the unhappy woman. The consequent retirement of Bianca had been a precious balm to her long mortified pride; and she had flattered herself that at last brighter days were before her, and that the mother of the heir to his crown would at least be held of some account in her husband's court, if not in his heart.

But gradually all these hopes failed her. Not only did the odious rival return, as we have seen, and recover all her previous ascendancy, but the arrival of her brother Vittorio, and the marked favour immediately shown to him by the Grand Duke, who received him as he might have done a visitor of princely rank, seemed to prove, that there was no hope of her being able to struggle against Francesco's infatuated affection for his mistress. The unhappy princess was expecting to be again confined in the spring of 1578, when these sorrows threw her back into the melancholy from which she had been for a brief space roused by the short-lived reconciliation with her husband. And there is little doubt that they contributed * to produce the fatal result which put an end to her joyless life on the 11th of May, 1578.†

Giovanna was not endowed with the qualities calculated to make her popular with the people of her adopted country. The cold Austrian nature, the absence of all personal charm, the pride of a scion of the house of Austria, so different in its kind from the lighter boastful vaingloriousness of their own princes, the haughty reserve and stiff ceremonial manners of the daughter of the line of Hapsburg, were uncongenial and disagreeable to the Florentines. A breaking heart, moreover, whose sorrows had to be hidden under a veil of courtly etiquette, was not calculated to improve these deficiencies. Notwithstanding all this, however, the too manifest unhappiness of her life, her dignified bearing under her misfortunes, the propriety of her conduct under strong temptation to act otherwise, all

* Litta. Fam. Med. Art. Giovanni.—Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. iii.
† See Appendix. Letter VIII. and Note.

conciliated to her the sympathy and respect, if not the love, of all classes of the people.

It was known that on her death-bed she had repeatedly* implored the Grand Duke, for his honour and conscience' sake, to separate himself from the woman who had rendered her life so miserable, declaring at the same time that she freely pardoned her for all the ill she had suffered at her hands. And these circumstances, combined with the intense hatred which all Florence nourished for her unworthy rival, "the witch" Bianca, caused her death to be sincerely mourned by the entire city. And almost every writer of the period has a word of sympathy and pity for this one among the many victims of Medicean cruelty and crime.

* Galluzzi. *Ibidem.*

CHAPTER V.

What is Francesco to do now?—The Cardinal and Bianca try another fall.—Cardinal down again.—Francesco's vengeance.—What does the Church say?—Bianca at Bologna.—The marriage privately performed.—The Cardinal learns the secret.—The daughtership of St. Mark.—Venetian doings *versus* Venetian sayings.—Embassy to Florence.—Suppose we could have her crowned.—The marriage publicly solemnised.

WHAT were Francesco's feelings on the death of his unloved wife? His conduct towards her had more than once got him into serious trouble with the Imperial Court. Little as he had heeded outraging her feelings, and parading his neglect of her before the world of Florence, still his intercourse with Bianca had been hampered by the necessity of making some little show of decency in the eyes of foreign courts. He had been obliged to have "riguardi," as the Italian phrase goes. Then Giovanna had been an expensive wife; far more so than Francesco liked. And now the cost of the magnificent obsequies, which were to lay her dust under the gorgeous dome of San Lorenzo, would be the closing article in that account.

Francesco was now free. Yet despite all these considerations, it may be very much doubted whether the death of his wife was matter of such unmixed contentment to him as it might at first sight seem to be. Now became due that bill drawn on futurity, that fatal promise to Bianca,—uttered "before an image,"

too, to make the matter worse,—that, should the time ever come, when they were both free, she should become his wife. It seems likely enough, that a feeling, which he may have mistaken for repentance, came over him in these days, when he thought on the slaughter of Bonaventuri.

It was not that the Grand Duke felt any repugnance in his own heart to perform his promise. His liking for his mistress seems to have been as strong or stronger than ever, and he wished sincerely to be married to her. But he hesitated to face the storm of disapprobation, which would follow the perpetration of such a mesalliance throughout Europe—the dismay of friends, the exultation of enemies, the discontent of his subjects, the ridicule of all. As for his promise, image and all, Francesco was not the man to be much troubled with any such bonds, if it suited his convenience to break them. He would have been bold enough to brave the resentment of any dead Saint in the calendar. But there was a living sinner, of whom he stood in considerably greater awe. How could he refuse to Bianca to keep the promise she had extorted, and the performance of which she would assuredly not now be weaker in exacting.

When the personal wishes of such a man as Francesco, strong only in wilfulness, and the determined will of such a woman as Bianca were on one side, and on the other only the fear of consequences, which could so far be kept at a distance, as never to be allowed to meet him face to face, it was little doubtful what the upshot would be. The contumely of Europe, and the reproaches of his family, might be effectually prevented from reaching his ears. But how avoid the nearer annoyances inseparable equally from living

without Bianca, and from living with her; yet not acceding to her just demands.

Still, for some time the disturbance of Francesco's mind seems to have been extreme. Still, he let "I dare not wait upon I would;" and lived the while in a condition of miserable uncertainty and agitation.* His first step after the death of Giovanna was to leave Florence, where the universal lamentation for his ill-fated wife disgusted him. Perhaps, also, during this time of doubt and conflicting resolutions he was glad to escape from the presence of Bianca. It seems probable, indeed, from his conduct, that this was really his wish for the moment. For instead of going to any one of the numerous residences belonging to him in different parts of Tuscany, he kept continually moving from place to place, wandering through the least frequented parts of his dominions.

The Cardinal, to whom the death of the Grand Duchess had been a cause of serious grief and disquietude, was much reassured by this apparent desire on the part of Francesco to avoid the seductress at this conjuncture. He went to Porto Ferraio in the island of Elba in the hope of finding the Grand Duke there, and thus getting the opportunity of conferring with him at a distance from the influences with which Bianca in general contrived to surround him. Francesco, however, avoided any such interview with his brother; and the Cardinal had to content himself with sending a secretary, in whom he could confide, to urge those considerations on the Grand Duke, which he would fain have set before him in person. The messenger caught the Duke in Serravezza, a little hill

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 3.

village high up among the Apennines, and then one of the most remote spots in the Duchy, though now well-known as giving its name to the neighbouring marble quarries, which rival those of Carrara in the quality of their produce.

The instructions of Ferdinand's envoy were to move Francesco by every possible consideration to marry again, choosing his wife from among the princesses of those sovereign houses whose friendship might be useful for the sustaining of the family greatness.* It is clear, therefore, that whatever may have been the case at a later period, Ferdinand had not yet conceived the desire that his brother's inheritance might fall on him. Up to this time he was evidently labouring sincerely in the cause of Francesco's credit and honour, and all his schemes for the aggrandisement of the family were centred in the Grand Duke, and in the hope of his leaving legitimately born heirs male of sovereign lineage to succeed him.

But his messenger brought him back an account of his interview with the Grand Duke, which seems to have very much changed the course of his policy and conduct for the future. Francesco would not hear of contracting any such new marriage as was proposed to him. He professed indeed his determination not to marry again at all. But the secretary was able to detail to his master, certain little indications gleaned from the phrases or the actions of the Duke, which led the acute Cardinal to the conviction that Francesco had already made up his mind to marry Bianca. And from thenceforth the Cardinal very manifestly changed his conduct. He no longer made any attempt to

* Galluzzi. *Ibidem.*

preserve even that outward appearance of family union, which he had hitherto, despite all difficulties and provocations, succeeding in maintaining. He quarrelled with his brother openly and publicly; and in all the political manœuvrings for the petty objects arising out of the jealousies of the Italian princely houses, which made up the life occupation of the cardinals living in the Roman court, he thenceforth took a line of his own, wholly distinct from, and in some respects opposed to that of his brother, and the general Medicean family interest. He, for instance, began to cultivate a friendship with the court of France, between which and Francis, who had always inclined to that of Spain, there had ever been enmity.

Just about this time especially, he was on ill terms with France, which had been guilty of injuring him in one of the tenderest points in which the feelings of a despotic prince such as Francesco can be touched. She had accorded protection to fugitives from his vengeance. Several of those who had been implicated in the Pucci conspiracy, such as Antonio and Piero Capponi, and Bernardo Girolami, as well as Troilo Orsini, with whose guilt we have had occasion to become acquainted, had escaped thither, and lived unmolested under the protection of France. This was intolerable to Francesco. It was not so much the feeling of pique and jealousy which might exist between two governments on the subject of harbouring each other's outlaws, and which may well be a ground of legitimate remonstrance and discontent between neighbouring nations; for such a grievance can be remedied only by inducing the offending government to give up the refugees to the legal tribunals of their own country. What rankled in Francesco's heart was simply the frustration

of his personal vengeance. And the measures which he adopted were accordingly directed wholly to the gratification of that feeling.

One Curzio Picchena was at that time secretary to the Florentine embassy at Paris, and to him was entrusted the execution of the Grand Duke's hitherto baulked revenge. He was directed to hire assassins to murder the above-named fugitives and others, at the price of four thousand ducats per murder. And he was furnished from Florence with poisons, the choice produce of the poison-laboratory established by Cosmo in the Uffizi, as one of the necessary institutions of statecraft, both for drugging the victims in case that should be found the preferable mode of proceeding, and for poisoning the weapons of the hired assassins if that course appeared more practicable! * So carefully provident was this Medicean proficient in the arcana of kingcraft!

Girolami was accordingly assassinated. But his fate warned the others of their danger; and some fled into the provinces, and some to England. It was then judged, says the Italian historian, that Italian cut-throats would be found more capable in their calling. Of these masters in their art then, some were sent into France, and some to England; and these, unlike the French bunglers, soon gave their sovereign all the satisfaction he craved.

Such were the cares of State, which contributed to burthen the Grand Ducal mind, already sorely oppressed by the necessity of deciding what was to be done in the matter of Bianca and her claims. The agitation of his mind manifested itself in bodily

* Galluzzi. *Ibidem.*

restlessness; and he continued to ramble about his dominions, while Bianca, thus prevented from seeing him, kept up an unceasing battery of letters. At length he hit upon the common refuge of imbecility, and determined to throw upon other shoulders the task of decision, which he found too arduous for his own: So he summoned an able theologian, reputed—undeservedly, as the result clearly indicates—to be a thorough master of his business; and, confiding to him his difficulties, the promise he had made, and his own private desire to fulfil it, demanded to be told what it was his duty to do.

Now it would surely seem clear enough to any one conversant with the duties of court chaplains, what was the course to take after such an exposition of the case as this. And to a plain man, ignorant of canonical statute law, and incapacitated by his low estate from comprehending the difference between princely honour and vulgar individuals' honour, it would surely seem that Francesco's moral and religious duty was to keep his promise and marry his mistress. But not so judged the able theologian. He pointed out, with all the eloquence of perfect climax, that such a marriage would be uncanonical, void, disreputable, and inexpedient. And, forgetting the broad hint given him by the gracious sovereign as to his own wishes in the matter, he pushed his zeal for canon law and blood-royal propriety so far as to convince the Duke against his will, with the ordinary result of such convictions.

But Bianca, as usual, showed herself in this crisis also, perfectly equal to the occasion. As soon as ever she learned that Francesco had taken it into his head to look at the matter in a theological point of view, she took immediate means of insuring a supply of

theological support from the most influential and effectual source. Francesco's own confessor was a Franciscan friar, he at least being the right man in the right place. To him Bianca found means of pointing out that the bishopric of Chiusi happened to be just then vacant. And the result of that communication was, that the Duke was very easily led to see all the professional mistakes committed by his previous adviser, and to arrive at the desired conclusion, that the Church and his duty required him to do exactly that which his own wishes prompted.

While theology was thus at work in her favour, Bianca was not idle on her own behalf. She was continually writing to the Grand Duke, and sometimes contrived to have news to tell him, tending to show how entirely their connection was recognised publicly, and respected. Thus we find from a MS.* record of the time, that she was at Bologna in the course of this spring with her daughter Pellegrina, and her son-in-law Ulisse Bentivoglio; and that she was received there with public honours, having been escorted into the city by a large company of the principal nobility, both cavaliers *and ladies*, "out of respect for the Grand Duke of Florence, seeing that the said Bianca was property of his—*sua cosa*." Surely it would be difficult to conceive a more striking mark of the degradation of a people, of their fitness to be slaves and unfitness to be anything else, than this going forth of the patricians of a great city to do honour to a prince's "cosa!" This, however, was of course not Bianca's reading of the incident, and its significance. Surely a "cosa" so received was worthy to become a wife! In short, writing sometimes

* MS. Rinieri, cited by Cigogna, Cenni Critico-storia, p. 42.

in one tone and sometimes in another, she ceased not to pour in a well-sustained fire of letters,* till at last, just when her ally the friar was convincing his penitent that it was his duty to marry her, she threw in a final missive, full of pathetic resignation to his will, and intimations of her own intention not to survive her disappointment.

The game so well played was won. Francesco finally agreed to the marriage. But as Bianca was very strongly of opinion that, "if it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly," and as it was impossible to celebrate the marriage openly within a month or two of the death of the Grand Duchess, it was determined that it should take place privately, and be kept profoundly secret till the following year.

Accordingly, the marriage was duly performed on the 5th of June, 1578, in the *Palazzo Vecchio*, by the same convenient Franciscan friar who had worked so well to bring it about. The date of this event has been erroneously stated by various writers; but it is ascertained with certainty from a copy of the original certificate signed by "Frater Masseus Antonii de Bardis," which is preserved in a MS. of the Marciana library, cited by Cigogna.† The witnesses were a brother Franciscan monk, and Don Pandolfo de' Bardi, a relative of the Duke's confessor. The same document states that the ceremony was performed "in majori palatio," in the *Palazzo Vecchio*, as it is now called. And if it should chance that the reader has seen the chapel of that venerable pile, it will recur to his recollection as a most fitting spot for the celebra-

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 3.

† Cenni, Storico-critici, p. 27.

tion of any rite intended to be concealed from all eyes. It is inaccessible, except through other apartments of the palace; so small, as barely to admit the parties whose presence was necessary to the ceremony; and, though most richly decorated, so dark, that the features of those standing within it can barely be recognised by each other.

In this secret spot the Franciscan friar performed the rite which, in homely English phrase, made an honest woman of Bianca; a feat which—to recur to the words already quoted—"if it were done, when 'tis done"—surely deserved the reward of the bishopric of Chiusi, or any other whatsoever.

So secret was the marriage kept, that even the lynx-eyed spies of the Cardinal had no suspicion of it. And he still continued,* despite his open quarrel with his brother, to make overtures in various Courts, in the hope of arranging some suitable marriage for him, for months after Bianca had made good her hold on him,—labours of her capable and crafty enemy which must, it may be supposed, have amused that lady not a little to witness.

In the early part of 1579 the Duke fell ill, and was at one time supposed to be in some danger; which furnished a pretext and opportunity to the Cardinal to visit his brother, with a view of getting at the truth respecting his position. For Francesco's steady refusal of the proposals made to him, and some other circumstances, had led him to conceive suspicions on the subject.

He found his brother ill in bed, exclusively attended by Bianca, to his great annoyance and disgust. And

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 3.

seized the first opportunity of reading the sick man a strong lecture on the impropriety, and even risk, of allowing that infamous woman to have the charge of his sick room. Whereupon Francesco felt himself obliged to let the secret out, and acknowledge that "the infamous woman" was Grand Duchess of Tuscany.

Ferdinand dissembled the excess of his sorrow and indignation at this confession, and remained with his brother till he was out of danger. But it is recorded, that when he repeated the fact to his confidential secretary, he could not refrain from tears of mortification; and he returned to Rome with a fresh accumulation of anger against his brother, and of the bitterest hatred for the woman, to whom he attributed the disgrace of his family, and the ruin of his well-plotted and laboriously prosecuted schemes for its aggrandisement.

The Grand Duke meanwhile, having recovered his health, continued to keep his marriage secret till the middle of April, when the year of mourning for his former wife was completed. Then his first care was to communicate the fact to his friend and patron, Philip of Spain, intimating that he awaited only his approval to publish it to all the courts. Philip, thinking probably that it mattered little whom a trading, plebeian-descended Medici married, gave his gracious approbation. But still one more step remained to be taken before making the public announcement to all Europe. Anxious to find some means of gilding a little, if possible, the ignoble object of his choice, he sent an embassy to Venice, informing the senate of his intention, in a highly flattering letter, to the effect that he considered the lady a daughter of the Republic, and that it is his hope in uniting himself to her, to

become a son of Venice, and ever to show himself such to the republic.

This embassy entrusted by Francesco to the Count Mario Strozzi of Santafiora, was received with every possible demonstration of respect and satisfaction by the Venetians. Santafiora was escorted into the city with public honours. Forty senators were deputed to wait on him in the name of the Republic. The Cappello palace was assigned to him as a residence, and he was received at the door of it by the Patriarch of Aquileia, the greatest man of the family connection. Bianca's father and brother were made cavalieri, dubbed "illustrissimi," and entitled to precedence over all other members of the order. In the gala doings which accompanied these events the Queen of the Adriatic outdid herself, we are told, in feasts and magnificence.* By a unanimous vote of the Senate on the 16th of June, in consideration of "the Grand Duke of Tuscany having chosen for his wife Bianca Cappello, of a most noble family in this city, a lady adorned with all those most excellent and singular qualities, which make her most worthy of any the highest fortune, it is ordered that she be created a true and particular daughter of the Republic."† The same decree orders a golden chain of the value of a thousand dollars to be given to Francesco's ambassador. Moreover, all unpleasant memorials of the time before the lady's most excellent and signal qualities had been discovered, were ordered, as we have seen, to be erased from the public registers.

It is difficult to understand all this excessive avidity

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, cap. 4.

† Registri secreti del Senato, cited by Cigogna.—Cenni, Critico-storici, p. 28.

of toad-eating servility and flunkeyism in such a body as the Venetian senate. But a few months previously they had manifested a very different tone of feeling on the subject of Bianca's connection with the Grand Duke, superior alike to any sentiments to be found among the Florentine nobles, and to these their own subsequent acts. For we read in a MS. chronicle of the time by Francesco Molino, cited by Cigogna,* that Bartolommeo Cappello, her father, having purchased the magnificent palace De' Trivigiani with money received from his daughter, was so ill-looked on in Venice in consequence, that he was solely on this account excluded from the senate; "inasmuch as it was thought that the connection of that family with the Prince Francesco arose from a base and disgraceful cause; and that though it might be profitable, and might, perhaps, be deemed honourable for others, it was not so for a Venetian gentleman."

That last touch of republican pride is magnificent; and it is a pity that any reasons of policy, or other motive of any kind, should have induced the senate to exhibit itself so lamentably false to all such generous feeling so shortly afterwards.

Francesco was exceedingly delighted at the abundant success of his embassy to Venice. Bianca now was—no, not *was* exactly—but might be supposed to seem to be, no longer a private individual, but a princess, as being the daughter of a sovereign state. By metaphor, fiction, parchment, and herald's trumpeting, Bianca was now a princess, of due rank to mate with a sovereign duke; and Francesco accordingly announced to the various courts on the 20th of June his forthcoming

* Cenni, Storici, p. 44.

marriage with a daughter of the republic of Venice. The ceremony was fixed for the 12th of October, 1579; and immense preparations were made to celebrate it with unusual pomp and splendour.

Meanwhile the Grand Duke sent his natural brother, Don Giovanni, a boy of twelve years old, with a numerous train, to bear his thanks to the Republic for the honours conferred on his bride. He was received by eight-and-twenty Venetian gentlemen at the frontier, and by forty senators outside the city, by whom he was processionally conducted to the Casa Cappello, where Vittorio, Bianca's brother, was charged by the senate to entertain him at the expense of the state, which granted an unlimited credit for that purpose. Under these circumstances it may be safely conjectured that the boy ambassador was received with such holiday keeping, as left on his mind no mean impressions of Venetian hospitality and magnificence.

On the 28th of September arrived in Florence the ambassadors sent by Venice "to put," says Galluzzi,* "Bianca in possession of the prerogatives which the daughtership of St. Mark produced to her." It is rather difficult to understand what these prerogatives might have been; but it is probable that if the baggage of the ambassadors had been searched for them, they would have been found to consist in a certain quantity of engrossed parchment and sealing-wax, cased in some more or less splendidly adorned wrappage of velvet or cloth of gold.

The ambassadors, however, Antonio Tiepolo and Giovanni Michiel, were assisted in bringing these "prerogatives" by a train of ninety gentlemen of the

* Lib. 4, ch. 4.

noblest houses in Venice. It was apparently thought necessary that the extrinsic pomp of this embassy should be in exact proportion to the intrinsic meanness of the business it was engaged on. For we are told that it outshone in taste and magnificence all former doings of the kind, even in the most palmy days of Venice. And all the ninety noble gentlemen who came to make *kotoo* to Francesco's *cosa*, vied with each other in efforts of ostentation for the manifestation of their own greatness.

Beside these ninety, there came also the bride's father and brother, and the Patriarch of Aquileia, by no means behindhand, the holy man, in availing himself of his scrap of relationship to the "cosa," for the purpose of bringing his grey hairs into the sunshine of a princely countenance. And with these came other eighty, all calling themselves relations of the bride; and all were lodged in the Pitti palace, and treated with all sorts of junkettings and diversions, banquets, balls, tourneys, hunting-parties (with nets), bull-baiting, chariot races, comedies, &c.

The task of thus entertaining his wife's relatives on this occasion is computed to have cost Francesco three hundred thousand ducats,* a sum which, allowing for the difference in the value of money, seems almost incredible. It happened to be a year of great scarcity in Tuscany. There was wide-spread and severe distress among the people, who looked on at this lavish and useless expenditure; and the sight did not contribute to conciliate the love of the Florentines to their new liege lady.

Meanwhile, in the interval between the arrival of

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 4.

the ambassadors in Florence, and the day appointed for the ceremony, it occurred to Francesco,* that the daughtership of St. Mark might be turned to better account yet. There had been two other daughters of St. Mark, one the wife of a king of Hungary, and the other Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus. Now, why should not Bianca also be crowned, as a daughter of the Republic. It would have a very good effect as part of the ceremony at all events, and might very likely pass with many persons for more than it really was. Crowning is crowning; and whether the crown to be placed on Bianca's head was that of St. Mark's daughter, or *that of a Grand Duchess of Tuscany*, might very easily be little observed or questioned.

The Venetian Senate on their part consented willingly to permit the ambassadors at Francesco's request to perform this ceremony in their name, but were quite awake to the same probability of error, and were anxious that their crowning of their daughter should be known to be their deed, and the dignity one of their bestowing. So the letter, by which they authorise Tiepolo and Michiel to comply with Francesco's wish enjoins, that in placing the crown on her head, "it shall be proclaimed in a loud voice, that it is in sign of her being a true and particular daughter of our Republic." And a second letter charges them to take care, that those words are so said "as to be distinctly heard by all around, and in such a manner that they be not drowned by any noise of trumpets or otherwise." †

But there was also another person in Florence, who pricked up his ears, and had a word to say in the

* Note 3. † Cigogna. Cenni, Storico-critici, p. 30.

matter, when he heard a talk of crowning going on. This was the Pope's nuncio, who protested that all crowning appertained to his master. And it was necessary to quiet him by pointing out and declaring explicitly, that what was proposed was no crowning of a Grand Duchess, but merely a token of the daughtership of St. Mark. And he also was anxious that this fact should be clearly avowed and understood.

Notwithstanding all this, however, many chroniclers contemporary and other, have written that Bianca was crowned Grand Duchess of Tuscany.* Perhaps the Florentine trumpets and shoutings contrived to make the words of the Venetian functionary inaudible despite his efforts to obey the senate and make himself heard.

The ceremony began on the appointed day in the great hall of the *Palazzio Vecchio*—the same hall in which Capponi had persuaded the Florentines to elect Jesus Christ for their king, and Savonarola had instructed the great council of the nation to abstain from debating, in order the more swiftly to act on his suggestion. In that famous old hall, once the very cradle of Italian freedom, and the heart of the popular life, a throne was built for the prince by right divine; —right truly and absolutely divine of those eternal laws, which make such princes the natural result of the lack of wisdom and worth, and excess of evil and unruly passions which had been exhibited in the councils of that council-chamber. The ungainly irregularity in the form of the enormous hall may have in some measure marred the symmetry of the upholstery magnificences. But Francesco and Bianca should

* See Cigogna. Cenni, Storico-critici, p. 31.

have been well content to pardon any such eyesore. For the fashion all awry of that home of the old Republic, in which no wall makes a right angle with its neighbour, commemorates literally, as well as typically, the implacable internecine party hatreds of the Florentines.* And had that stone embodiment of the spirit of the old Italian commonwealths been able to be built straight, Florence would not have had that day to stand abject, vicious, and degraded to bow before a despot and his . . . *cosa*.

When the prince was seated, and all his military, legal and clerical flunkeys in their proper liveries, duly ranged around him, Bianca was led in by the ambassadors of Venice; and floods of speechifying, easy to be imagined, but intolerable to read, were uttered by the various functionaries of either nation. Probably if might be difficult for the strictest analysis to detect one particle of truth in all that was said. To Grimani, the old patriarch of Aquileia, it fell to make an oration "on the utility of this marriage and the value of the daughtership of St. Mark." The two ambassadors did their crowning; but in some way or other failed to do it to the satisfaction of the Senate. For when they, in accordance with Venetian law, asked permission to keep the present of a ring worth fifteen hundred dollars, given to each of them by Francesco, it was refused.†

When the business had been got through thus far, Bianca was carried,—chaired, it should seem like a newly elected M.P.,—with the crown on her head to the cathedral; and there were done "sacred sacrifices," "divine services," and other such unbounded lying of

* Note 4. † Cigogna. Cenni, Storico-critici, p. 32.

an intensified, infinite, and yet more pernicious sort than that previously perpetrated in the lay part of the business.

And so Bianca was made a Duchess—nay Grand Duchess; and stepped triumphantly on her *excelsior* path, rewarded by success for her long efforts, patient endurance, sleepless astute vigilance, courageous battling with danger and difficulty, and unscrupulous daring.

Honesty the best policy! Policy, for what object? Not for scaling the throne of a Grand Duchess apparently!

CHAPTER VI

Bianca's new policy.—New phase of the battle between the Woman and the Priest.—Serene, or, not serene! that is the question.—Bianca protests against sisters.—Death of the child Filippo.—Bianca's troubles and struggles.—The villa of Pratolino.—Francesco's extraordinary mode of life there.

THE ninety embassy-followers, and the eighty kinsmen, were kind enough to give Francesco the pleasure of their company for some time after the marriage; but towards the end of October they returned to Venice, carrying with them presents of collars of gold and jewels. The Patriarch had his full share of gifts,* and all the swarm of the relatives "proportionably." But father-in-law Bartolommeo carried off not only very large sums of money, but a good pension for life. Brother-in-law Vittorio declined to return to Venice any more at all, purposing to devote himself wholly to the service of his august kinsman. A large pension, not for life, but to him and his heirs for ever (!), and a dower for his daughter, was the least that could reward such zeal. Bianca's pin-money was fixed at an hundred thousand ducats, to be invested in the mint of Venice.

What were the feelings being stored up the while in the breasts of the Florentines in their dearth and famine time towards Bianca, may be imagined. And when it is remembered, that one of Francesco's

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 4.

strongest passions was avarice, the excess of all this munificence towards Bianca, and her belongings, may help to give us the measure of the influence that she had acquired over him. Yes! it must be admitted that Bianca had decidedly succeeded!

Hitherto we have seen the Cardinal Ferdinando and his new sister-in-law open and inveterate enemies; and the former at each critical point of the war between them has been beaten. During the period of her struggle to win her footing in the family, she judged it necessary to her success, that Francesco and his brother should be at enmity. But now, that her position as a member of the house of Medici was indefeasibly won, and its interests were her interests, she was anxious to bring about a reconciliation with her brother-in-law.

She opened her new campaign by inducing her husband to change his manner towards his brother. Francesco had always manifested his irritation under the politic Cardinal's sermons and remonstrances, by treating him on all the occasions, when business matters made it necessary for them to communicate, with the greatest rudeness and discourtesy. Under Bianca's management, all this soon disappeared. She was able also to bring about a change which affected Ferdinando yet more sensibly. His magnificent and ostentatious habits caused him always to be in difficulties; and he was very frequently desirous of being allowed to anticipate a little his drafts on his Florentine appanage. This Francesco, rejoicing in an opportunity of spiting his respectable brother, had always, in the most disobliging manner, refused. *Now* it is intimated to our good brother, that if it should be convenient to him to anticipate his revenues a little, the Grand Duke will be delighted to accommodate him. Then the clever lady

finds the means of entering into an epistolary commerce with this highly respectable churchman, who had so sedulously kept her and her abominations from coming between the wind and his propriety. And it is not without considerable elevation of the eyebrows that we find her writing to him on the 24th of December,* 1580, in such terms as the following:

"I live," she assures him, "more for you than for myself. Indeed, I live but in you, for I cannot live without you;"—which, as the historian observes, are "very cordial expressions." We shall be justified, however, in assuming that, despite their "cordiality," they were not accurately expressive of the fact; even if we do not go the length of supposing, as many narrators of Bianca's story do, that they express the exact contrary of the fact, we may probably also safely conclude further, that the Cardinal did not believe more of them than we do. And, indeed, it seems difficult to suppose that Bianca should have expected him to believe them. Nevertheless, the dexterous lady's civilities, and *patte de velours*, did so far prevail, that to the exceeding surprise of all Florence, and to the great dismay of the anti-Medicean faction among the cardinals at Rome, Ferdinando made his appearance in Florence to spend the "villeggiatura" with his brother in the autumn of 1510. Francesco was all kindness and as generous as his ungracious nature would permit him to be, and Bianca the perfection of amiability and deferential affection. The Cardinal was perfectly ready, and well pleased to sacrifice, if not the reality of his deep resentment, at least the outward manifestation of it, to the political objects which were interfered with by

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 5.

the open schism in the family; and the reconciliation appeared to be complete.

But from this time forward, the vantage-ground in the long battle between the woman and the churchman was no longer, as it had hitherto been, on the side of the former. Whether it were, that the tactics adapted to a state of open warfare were better suited to the violent and daring, though by no means sincere nature of Bianca, while the profound dissimulation of hatred, under the mask of friendship, was more congenial to the habits of the politic and respectable churchman, the fact is, that the Grand Duchess had gained her last victory, and that at every subsequent turn of the game the Cardinal had the upper hand, till her final discomfiture left him triumphant master of the field.

For the present, however, it perfectly suited both parties to act in concert with reference to the great object of Medicean state policy, which was then occupying Francesco, and may be, indeed, said to have been the leading aim and interest of his life.

His father, Duke Cosmo, by dint of assiduous obsequiousness to Pope Pius V., and as the price of the blood of his subjects, delivered over to the Inquisition on charges of heresy, had obtained from that pontiff the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany.* But, as Sismondi well observes,† inasmuch as Tuscany was not, and had never been a fief of the Church, the Pope could have no sort of right to change the title of its sovereign. Accordingly, both the Emperor, whose prerogatives were thus infringed, and the other Italian Dukes, above whom Cosmo sought to take rank by virtue of this new title, refused to admit its validity. And

* Adriani. Lib. 19.—Galluzzi. Lib. 3.

† Republiques. V. 16, p. 204.

Cosmo died while negotiations with the Emperor were yet pending on the subject. But Francesco succeeded in inducing the Emperor Maximilian II. to confer on him the much desired title by a new decree, taking no notice of the previous concession by the Pope.*

But even then, the other sovereigns of Italy would not admit the precedence thus established in favour of the Medici. Especially the haughty and ancient house of Este could not brook that the plebeian upstarts, whose fathers had been haggling for percentages, while *their* ancestors had been defending their ancient fiefs in the saddle, should now take rank in Europe above them. The Duke of Savoy was equally determined to dispute this promotion over his head; and the Duke of Mantua thought the Gonzagas were as good as the Medici any day.

The style and title attached to the grand-ducal dignity, it seems, was "Most Serene Highness;" and it was very easy for Francesco so to call and write himself, and be called in his own duchy. But the misery of the case was, that all the others forthwith began to do the same. Not a dukeling of them would any more be content to be a "Most Illustrious Excellency." One after another all called themselves "Most Serene" in the coolest manner; and it was even feared, say the historians,† that the little Republics would begin to think themselves serene too.

Venice had, time out of mind, always been "most serene," and was by all parties admitted to be so. But the Queen of the Adriatic insisted upon being not only most, but sole serene, and would give the coveted title to none of the disputing parties. Once, indeed, we

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4.—Sismondi. Ch. 123.

† Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 5.

read, the Cardinal d'Este being at Venice, did somehow manage to betray the Doge into speaking of his brother, the reigning Duke of Ferrara, as "his Most Serene Highness;" and great was the triumph of the House of Este. But it was short; for the assembled senate were much displeased at what their Doge had done; and solemnly decreed that it was only a slip of the tongue.

Meantime poor Francesco was, if anything, rather worse off than all the illegitimate serene highnesses. For those wicked and unprincipled confounders of all distinctions agreed together to call each other serene, while nobody would call him so. It was a cruel case; and the Grand Duke, we read,* shook with rage, at the thought of all the trouble he had taken, and all the money he had spent in procuring this title, only to find himself after all no serener than his neighbours.

But the cruellest cut of all was to hear that some of these vile pretenders had obtained recognition of their false serenity at the court of France, at the hands of a Medici, and she the head of his house! He sent an envoy to Paris, who under pretext of asking payment of certain moneys lent by him to Charles IX., was to see if the queen-mother could be got to favour his views in the title question. But Catherine replied to his first hint of the matter, that "she did not see how she could do anything for the Grand Duke in that business, seeing that he could give the King of Spain a million of gold at a time, while with her and her son, on the other hand, he looked after so small a matter as that which they owed." The envoy humbly observed that the King of Spain had not done his

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 5.

master the ill-turn in the title business which the Queen had done. "And I did it on purpose," rejoined Catherine, "in return for the small respect the Duke has paid me and my son, in committing assassinations beneath our eyes. And you may write to your master, that he do nothing of the sort again, and specially that he lay hand on no man within this realm; for the King, my son, will not endure it." So Francesco took nothing by that motion.

He carried his complaints next to the Emperor Rodolph II.; begging, that in the Diet shortly to be held, some curb might be put on the usurpations and abuses, which threatened, he said, to make all equal, and leave no distinctions of rank at all. The Duke of Urbino now asserted that he too was as serene as his neighbours; and there was reason to fear that the viceroy of Naples, and even the governor of Milan, would soon be putting forth the same pretensions. He urged on the consideration of the Emperor, that "the distinction of ranks and precedences was so necessary and profoundly based in the very nature of things, that even in hell there were found to be such distinctions among the devils and the damned."* And one cannot but feel the force of the argument in the mouth of Francesco, that what was good for devils must be good for dukes.

But the Duke of Savoy was also making remonstrances to the Emperor. He boasted his descent from the ancient family of Saxony; and argued, remarkably enough, that this fact of German extraction ought to assure him the primacy among all Italian dukes. And it is worthy of note, that the Diet con-

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 6.

sidered such a claim well-founded, and in their report to the Emperor begged him "to remember that the Duke of Savoy was of German origin, and for that reason to decree, that he should have precedence over all the dukes of *that province*."—meaning thereby simply Italy from the Alps to Calabria. The Duke of Ferrara also sent envoys to the Emperor, imploring him to think a little of the difference between his family and that of the Medici, and to let him at least be "most illustrious," if he could do nothing better for him.

Rodolph, however, whose only object was, if possible, to keep them all quiet, would say nothing further than, that in a matter of so great importance, more mature consideration and longer thought was necessary.

Any attempt to unravel and detail all the intrigues, negotiations, schemes, and machinations, to which this question of precedency gave rise, would almost involve writing the official and court history of Italy for nearly half a century. The election of popes was struggled for, cardinals were created, royal marriages made and plotted, alliances and hostilities entered upon, all with a view to this matter. And treaties between one state and another chiefly turned on the condition that one party should admit the "serenity" of the other. Surely "low ambition and the pride of kings," never stooped to busy themselves about "meaner things," than these silly and ridiculously vain-glorious puerilities. It is curious to mark, how the means adopted by the despots of Italy to enervate and degrade their people, acted equally on themselves; and ensured, that the ruler of a nation of fribbles and slaves, should be an eminent "representative man" of their own order.

It is amusing to find, that Bianca had no sooner entered the magic circle of the sacred brotherhood of sovereigns, than she too, as though she had been "to the manner born," shaped herself to the ways and thoughts of her new peers, and must needs have her troubles and negotiations about her rank and style and dignity! If emperors could smile at the ridicule of sovereign dukes, surely the commentary thus supplied on Francesco's pathetic complaint, that even the devils in hell have their proper rank and title, must have relaxed the grim Hapsburg features a little! The case was this:—Don Cesare d'Este, it was reported, was to marry the daughter of the Doge Niccolò da Ponte; one of the conditions of the contract being that the bride was to be crowned daughter of the Republic! Where was the use of giving Francesco the title of "most serene," if every other was to be as serene as he? And where was the compliment of making Bianca a daughter of St. Mark, if the saint was going to have a whole family of daughters? Bianca sent an envoy to Venice to remonstrate, and insist on her claim to be not only the daughter, but the only daughter of St. Mark.

When Bianca's remonstrance was read by her envoy in the Senate, those grave and reverend Seniors, Galluzzi* tells us, burst into uncontrollable laughter. Reflecting, however, that the step taken must be considered as a complaint of the sovereign of Tuscany against their state, and that therefore some serious answer must be given to it, they passed a censure on the secretary who had read this precious document, for venturing to bring any such matter before them,

* Lib. 4, ch. 6.

declared that they knew nothing of any such proposed marriage, and reminded Bianca, that her quality of daughter of St. Mark did not confer upon her any right whatsoever to interfere with the deliberations of the Republic. The grand-ducal envoy strove to make the best of the matter for his employers, by protesting that his mistress's jealousy on the subject arose solely from the very high value she set on that honour, and should be taken to indicate only the intensity of her affection and respect for the Republic. But the Senate could not be restored to good humour. The consciousness, perhaps, that a ridicule had been cast, even by the laughter into which they had been surprised themselves, on the daughtership of the Republic, helped to make them feel angry; and the envoy was curtly answered, that his application was ill-considered, untimely, and calculated to lead to unpleasant consequences. With which almost menacing answer Bianca's messenger had to return to her.

On the 29th of March, in this same year, 1582, poor Giovanna's son Filippo died in his fifth year. It was a severe blow to the Grand Duke. But as, according to the etiquette of the Spanish court, Philip II. had neither manifested nor permitted to be manifested any sign of grief when *his* first-born son died, Francesco thought that he would show his royal breeding by imitating so bright an example. Bitter as the loss was to him, therefore, he would not suffer a sigh to escape him, and forbade all mourning whatsoever.* But the Tuscans, who had too recently been made acquainted with a sovereign to have learnt the ways and habits of the race, misunderstood their Duke's

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 5.

high-breeding; and thinking simply that Francesco was not sorry for the infant's death, proceeded to conclude, according to a course of things which *was* familiar and intelligible to them, that Bianca had poisoned the child,

There is, however, not the slightest reason to suspect that anything of the kind was the case. And it may even be doubted whether the death was welcome to Bianca. It is true, that any hope she may have conceived of being able to secure the succession for Don Antonio,—and she seems at times to have formed schemes of the kind,—was rendered possible only by this event. Barring any offspring which might afterwards be born either to Ferdinando or Pietro, Antonio was now the only (reputed) descendant of the house. But, on the other hand, the death of his son threw the Grand Duke into a deeper gloom of melancholy and discontent than ever. And Francesco was not an easy man to live with under such circumstances.

His repining often took the form of reproaches to Bianca for her childlessness. And, assuredly, never were reproaches less deserved, if an earnest desire for offspring, that would continue hoping against hope, were any title to escape from them. Not a nostrum-monger was to be heard of on either side of the Alps, that the unhappy woman did not summon to her aid. With untiring perseverance and ever renascent credulity, she essayed their prescriptions, whether mystical or physical, with the result, it would seem, of very seriously impairing her constitution. More than once she deceived her husband, and very possibly was deceived herself, by false announcements of her pregnancy. If, as it is stated,* she made Francesco believe

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 6.

that she had suffered once or more from miscarriage during these years, she was of course guilty of deceit, however much she may have been imposed upon by the impostors who surrounded her. And the only intelligible motive of such falsehood would seem to have been the notion, that by thus keeping alive her husband's hope of having an heir by her, the danger that he might perhaps seek to break his marriage with her, in order to unite himself with some more fortunately circumstanced wife, might be avoided.

The principal residence of the unhappy couple at this period was the solitary villa of Pratolino. The name will be familiar to most travellers in Italy; for the pretty park on the slope of the Apennine, with its magnificent view of the vale of Arno and distant Florence far beneath it, has become a favourite haunt of Florentine pic-nic parties. And the bright green glades, cool mountain air, and fine old trees, make the scenery more like that of English pleasure-grounds than perhaps any other spot in Italy.

But the dwelling in which the moody Duke hid himself and his wife from the hate-envenomed eyes of his subjects, exists no longer. Of the pleasure villa, the title of which, like that of many another pleasure scheme, turned out to be so mocking a satire on the designer of stone and mortar happiness, not one block remains upon another. It was situated about eight miles from Florence, in the direction of Bologna, a distance sufficient to secure to Francesco perfect retirement, and that total neglect of all state business and cares in which he indulged during the latter years of his reign. The contemporary accounts* which have come

* Letter from Giovanni Vettorio Sodorini to Signore Silvio Piccolomini; printed in the Notes to Guerrazzi's "Isabella Orsini," p. 179.

down to us of the manner of life he led, shut up in his solitary villa with the unhappy Bianca, are so strange, as to warrant us in concluding that some touch of insanity must have mingled in the disastrously combined elements of his mental and physical constitution. The extraordinary excesses recorded as having been habitual to him are more like the freaks of a madman than the indulgences of a voluptuary.

We hear of his abuse of distilled waters and elixirs; his "immoderate and pernicious familiarity* with oil of vitriol, and too frequent use of distilled cinnamon water." His food was always compounded with "hot spices, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and pepper." He would take before eating, during his meal, and after it, a quantity of raw eggs, filled with the hot red pepper of Spain. He was fond of the most indigestible kinds of food, and would eat to excess of raw garlic and capsicums, raw onions, radishes, leeks, and roots of various sorts, with enormous quantities of the strongest cheese. His wine was always of the most fiery and heady sorts. And when he had heated himself beyond endurance with inordinate quantities of such burning liquors and spices, and loaded his stomach with such crudities, he would drink large quantities of iced water, plunge his head and hands in snow, and go to bed in iced sheets. This latter practice was his constant habit; and the writer of the letter cited above says that he did so in imitation of Prospero Colonna and other men of note of that time,—a not improbable trait in the character of a man who refused to mourn his child's death in imitation of another great man.

The characteristic manifestations of his mental

* "Familiarità con l'olio di vetriolo."

condition the while, were, if unhappily less extraordinary, yet quite as unhealthy as his bodily habits. A dark heavy melancholy, ever and anon blazing out in fits of savage ferocity, seemed to grow upon him from day to day. And, upon the whole, he must at this period have been as dangerous and intolerable an animal to live with as can well be imagined.

And if now, once again, we suppose Bianca to cast up her accounts and "take stock" of her position, shut up in this lonely Apennine villa, with a half-mad savage for her mate, conscious of having earned the bitterest hatred and execrations of an entire people, and tormented with unceasing repining for the one unattainable blessing, which should have realised, or seemed to realise, some gain out of so much sin and suffering,—perhaps she may have begun to have misgivings as to the measure and value of her "success."

CHAPTER VII.

The family feeling in Italy.—Who shall be the heir?—Bianca at Cerreto.—Camilla de' Martelli.—Don Pietro on the watch.—Bianca at her tricks again.—The Cardinal comes to look after matters.—Was Francesco dupe or accomplice?—Bianca's comedy becomes a very broad farce.—A "Villegiatura" at Poggio-a-Cajano.—The Cardinal wins the game.

THE death of the chief Filippo was a not less important event to the Cardinal Ferdinando, than to Bianca and Francesco. Ferdinando would have been well content to see the succession of his family pass in due course to a legitimate heir of his elder brother, born of a mother of princely rank. Possibly he might even have been contented if there could have been a legitimately born heir by Bianca. His ambition was wholly for the family, the clan, the race whose name he bore. The excess of this vice, or virtue, is very remarkably characteristic of the Italian idiosyncrasy. It marks every page of the entire course of Italian history, and indeed may be said to constitute a large portion of it. Ferdinando lived for the advancement of the Mediceän fortunes and greatness. His feelings and his crimes were prompted by this his master passion; and his virtues, such as they were, of decorousness, moderation, and long-suffering forbearance under his brother's provocations, were practised for the same sake.

Bianca manifested, as we have seen, a similar

tendency. The first fruits of the great rise in the world, which made her a prince's "cosa," were dedicated to promote the greatness of the Cappello family. The large sums, grasped in Florence, as the price of degradation, fraud and venality, were despatched to the still dear Venice, which had outlawed her, and to the father, who had first neglected her and then put a price upon her husband's head, not assuredly from tender filial affection, but that a new Cappello palace might be purchased, and the Cappello name be made great in Venice.

This constantly recurring feeling, which at bottom is but the expression of an intensified individuality, will be found to lie at the root of Italian national disaster; and, to be an operating cause, to a greater degree probably than any other circumstance, of the secular impossibility—or extreme difficulty, let us more hopefully say—of constructing a nation out of the materials bequeathed by the Italian middle ages to modern times. The intense and exclusive devotion to family in the men who have ancestors, and the same feeling translated into devotion equally intense and exclusive to a municipality, in the men who have none, act as a mutually repellent force on the constituent parts of society, are a dissolvent instead of a uniting and constructive influence, and are deadly to all national patriotism.

Ferdinando then asked only, that the name and greatness of his family should be pepetuated by a regular duly born heir to his eldest brother. And the death of the little Filippo was to him a misfortune of the most fatal kind. For now again the danger that the wretched purchased base-born brat they called Antonio, might become the successor to all the honours, wealth, and greatness of the extinct Medici, became

imminent. And the idea was utterly intolerable. Rather than that . . . anything, that might be necessary to prevent it!

The conduct of Francesco with reference to Don Antonio after Filippo's death was such as to justify in the strongest manner the Cardinal's misgivings and suspicions respecting his brother's, and more especially Bianca's intentions concerning him. The estates settled on him were increased to the value of sixty thousand scudi a year. A magnificent villa, and grand palace in the city were prepared for his use. Worse still, Francesco had obtained from the king of Spain that the estates purchased for this fortunate youth in the kingdom of Naples should be erected into a principality. And Don Antonio accordingly, now took the style and title of a Prince, and assumed palpably the next place after the sovereign in the eyes of the Florentines.

These circumstances induced the Cardinal in the course of the year 1585, to think seriously of obtaining a dispensation, to enable him to quit the priesthood, give up his cardinal's hat, and marry. Before taking this extreme step however, he determined on endeavouring, if possible, to persuade his brother, Don Pietro, to marry. This was very difficult to do. For though Pietro hated his eldest brother and Bianca quite well enough to be ready to do his best to counteract their plans, he cared nothing for the family name or greatness; and the extreme profligacy of his life made marriage extremely distasteful to him. He alleged in reply to the Cardinal's instances, that the vow he had made to the Virgin, on the occasion of murdering his wife, stood in the way. He had solemnly promised not to marry again, and could not charge his

conscience with the breach of so solemn a vow. He added, to save trouble, that no theologian would succeed in persuading him,* that the engagement so undertaken was not valid. Nevertheless, he at last consented to do as the Cardinal would have him; and accordingly set on foot negotiations for obtaining the hand of a lady of the Spanish court. Having done this much however, he seemed to be in no hurry to conclude the matter, and continued his usual dissolute life in Florence.

At length, about the middle of November, 1585, he so far yielded to the urgent representations of the Cardinal, as to announce his intention of starting for Spain, to conclude in person the arrangements for his marriage. But about a month later, while he was still waiting for the passage of the Spanish galleons, the news was suddenly spread over Tuscany, that the Grand Duchess had had a miscarriage while staying at Cerreto. Cerreto was a remote villa belonging to the Grand Duke, in the hills, near Empoli, in the lower Valdarno. Some writers assert, that it was in this lonely old castle, and not at Poggio Imperiale, that Paolo Giordano Orsini murdered Isabella. At all events, the place was well adapted for the perpetration of such a deed; and it would seem to have no recommendation save its remoteness, which could have induced Bianca to select it as the scene of her confinement.

This new attempt convinced both the younger brothers of the absolute necessity of keeping the strictest possible watch on Bianca and the Grand Duke. It was pretty clear indeed, that the Grand Duchess only awaited a good opportunity for a

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 6.

repetition of the farce so successfully played at the birth of Don Antonio. This time it had for some reason failed. The mother of the child provided for the contemplated fraud may have miscarried;—the child may have died; or some other accident of the kind have made it necessary that Bianca should terminate her comedy thus ineffectually. But there was every reason to fear that the attempt would be repeated, and very possibly with better success.

Pietro therefore determined to defer his departure; and the Cardinal, when he heard his reasons for doing so, fully approved of his remaining in Florence, till they could have an opportunity of consulting together on the subject.

This was furnished them early in the following year, 1586, on the occasion of the marriage of Virginia de' Medici, the daughter of Cosmo by his wife Camilla de' Martelli, with Don Cesare d'Este. Virginia was thus half-sister to Francesco, Ferdinando, and Pietro, and the Cardinal was to come to Florence to be present at the ceremony. The marriage was accompanied by more than usual splendour. But the only circumstance that excited* the interest of the Florentines in the matter, was to see their old Grand Duchess, poor Camilla Martelli, still very beautiful, appearing once again among them, as if risen from the grave. Francesco had permitted her to come out from her nunnery prison, in which he had kept her now twelve years, to be present at the marriage of her daughter. And all Florence was disgusted and astonished, as far as any fresh atrocity on the part of Francesco could astonish it, when the unhappy lady was, at the conclusion of the ceremony, compelled to return to her cell.

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 7.

Ferdinando, who had frequently endeavoured in vain to induce his brother to mitigate the rigour of her imprisonment, was much angered by this new cruelty. His disgust was increased by the Duke's curt refusal to lend him any money; and he returned to Rome with feelings as hostile to his brother as they had ever been; but not before he had arranged with Don Pietro that he should remain in Florence to watch the proceedings of Bianca and the Grand Duke. The Cerreto event was rendered much more important in their eyes, by the circumstance of the Duke's having, by a formal circular, announced the pregnancy of the Grand Duchess and its unfortunate termination to all the friends and connections of the family. Of what use was it, they asked, to publish the news of a misfortune of such a nature? Evidently it was intended only to keep alive in the minds of those addressed, the expectation that Bianca might have another confinement, and thus prepare the way for a new fraud.

To guard against this was, as the Cardinal felt, paramount to all other considerations. Anxious, therefore, as he had been that Don Pietro should proceed to Spain, to conclude the arrangements for his own marriage, he judged it yet more important that he should for the present remain at Florence.

And it was not long before the suspicions, which had dictated this surveillance, were justified by the event.

In the April of 1586, reports began to be spread that the Grand Duchess was again pregnant. And on the 15th of that month Don Pietro wrote to the Cardinal as follows:—

"I learned from a sure source that Pellegrina"—

* Printed by Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 7.

Bianca's daughter by Bonaventuri, born, as the reader may remember, shortly after her arrival in Florence,—"was with child; and that the fact was kept secret with the greatest care. Some excuse has been found for sending abroad the Count Ulisse,"—Pellegrina's husband, Ulisse Bentivoglio,—"in order that his wife might naturally, and without giving any cause for suspicion, be brought to stay in the palace during his absence. And I have already found out, that in the rooms which it is intended to assign to her, there are no end of hiding-places, and secret stairs communicating with the chamber of the Grand Duchess. All which leaves very little doubt as to this woman's intention. Now, having had ground to fear that some knowledge of Pellegrina's being with child had got abroad, they have told the public that she has miscarried. And this circumstance leads me to feel the more sure of the game she is bent on. And it strikes me, that they have so favourable a combination of person, place, and good-will for the accomplishment of their end, that my presence here can do little to prevent it. For, as to the place, the numerous means of ingress and egress, render it the most adapted for their purpose that could be imagined. As for the person, having Pellegrina with child, ready there to their hand, they may accomplish their object at any moment that is most convenient. And as for good will, there can be no doubt that the Grand Duke would far rather be succeeded on the throne by the grandchild of his wife, than by one in whom he has no interest. It is for your Eminence to judge whether under these circumstances my presence here can be of any use; and whether indeed it may not be more harmful than otherwise; seeing that they will assuredly bring their scheme to bear; and if I am compelled to be here and to look

on in silence, the world will consider that a ground for believing the pregnancy of the Grand Duchess to be genuine."

The fact was that the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess did everything they could think of to make remaining at Florence intolerable to Don Pietro. The courtiers were encouraged to treat him in every possible way with disrespect and insolence. A Spanish mistress, who was living with him at Florence, was continually insulted by Bianca. The Grand Duke's own manner was so brutal to him, that Pietro avoided ever being seen by him. All this torment kept Pietro, who was a passionate man, and unused to the Cardinal's habits of self-command and dissimulation, in such a state of irritation, that he was anxious only to escape from Florence. "I remain here," he wrote to the Cardinal, "with such loathing, that any other place however wretched would be a Paradise to me in comparison." And he told him how his suspicions were confirmed, and at the same time his presence rendered of small avail, by the placing of new sentinels in various parts of the palace, the erection of gates on the staircases, and the total inaccessibility of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess.

The Cardinal still urged him to arm himself with patience, and remain at his post, till they should have an opportunity of consulting together upon the subject in person. "The pregnancy of Pellegrina," he wrote, "gives me less suspicion than that of any other woman. For her lying-in would be necessarily attended with so many circumstances of publicity, with regard to time, place, number, and quality of assistants, &c., that it would seem impossible to turn it to account for the purpose in question. Nevertheless, it is well to keep a

watchful eye upon her; but not with such exclusive attention as to prevent you from looking elsewhere. For those who are bent on similar frauds have need rather of the aid of the lowest classes of society, whose children come into the world at street corners."

At last, however, Don Pietro's letters urging the Cardinal to consent to his leaving Florence became so pressing, concluding as they did with a hint, that if he were kept there any longer, "something might happen which his Eminence might be very sorry for, when it was too late to help it," that Ferdinando thought it best to agree to his going to Spain. It was determined, however, that before his departure he should find some means of letting the Grand Duke and Duchess know that they were watched, and thus warning them, that any attempt to tamper with the succession of the Duchy would not pass unobserved or undisputed.

Accordingly, when it happened that Bianca, who was extremely anxious to get rid of her brother-in-law, sent him notice that the Spanish galleons were at Leghorn, and that, if he wished for a passage, it behoved him to start, he took the opportunity of waiting upon her; and in reply to her intimation, said that he should consider himself failing in the duty he owed her Highness if he were not to wait until her confinement were over, especially as the Cardinal had made a great point of his paying her that attention. Bianca replied that she really did not think for her part that she was with child; that the Grand Duke indeed had got it into his head that she was so, and could not be persuaded otherwise; that it was true enough that she was far from well; but that, if she really were with child, she was certainly only in the third month; and that whatever the event might be, she would take care that he

and the Cardinal should be made acquainted with it instantly.

In the letter, in which Pietro gives the Cardinal an account of this interview,* he writes: "I watched most closely her manner and the changes of her countenance, which were exceedingly visible. She changed colour in the most violent manner. It seems to me that I have done my part of the business, and have left such a fly in her ear, that she will either find herself forced to declare herself shortly, or that she will have the greatest difficulty in bringing her scheme to a good issue."

It was not long before the Cardinal came himself to Florence, to see how matters were going on, much to the annoyance of the Grand Duke. He brought with him his cousin, Don Luigi di Toledo; and, by his means, took care to pour into Francesco's ear all the sinister rumours which were, he said, afloat respecting Bianca's pregnancy. He made Don Luigi tell him, as from himself, that unpleasant things had been said at the court of Spain; and pointed out to him, that, under these circumstances, his honour absolutely required that the birth of a prince, if, indeed, one was about to be born, should be so managed as to remove all possibility of suspicion and slander.

The Grand Duke became more and more irritated from day to day, as these rumours and observations were forced upon him. He grew restless and agitated; and conceived a more bitter hatred than ever against Ferdinando, who was, as he believed, with a near approach to truth, the principal, if not the only mover of it all. But it is remarkable, as Galluzzi observes, that the more the Grand Duke became savage and

* Printed by Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 7.

brutal in his manner to the Cardinal, the more profuse was Bianca in graciousness and affability, and in the apparent openness with which she spoke to him of her hopes or fears.

Leaving matters in this train, the Cardinal returned to Rome; while, according to Florentine court authorities, Bianca's pregnancy continued to proceed towards its conclusion in the most satisfactory manner. The Grand Duke's conduct during this time makes it very difficult to judge whether he sincerely believed that the Grand Duchess was about to give him an heir at last, or whether he was all the time contemplating a second performance of the farce which took place at the birth of Don Antonio, of which he had been at first the dupe, but in which he had become afterwards the accomplice;—or, finally, whether both these suppositions were true, so that, if his sincere hopes of a child by Bianca should be disappointed, he was ready to supply the desideratum by a fraud. He lived in a perpetual agitation of mind, and showed a degree of irritation and annoyance at the notice which the Cardinal's manœuvres had drawn upon the doings at the Pitti, that, joined to his former conduct, is suspicious. On the other hand, he acted in many respects as if he were sincere in the matter.

It is also to be observed that, possibly enough, Bianca may have been sincere on this occasion; especially as we know she never abandoned her hopes, and was always trying new means to bring about her desire. She seems to have professed to be very doubtful on the subject to the last. But some writers insinuate, that while she expressed doubts to the Cardinal, she spoke in an entirely different manner to her husband.

Meantime, the daily reports in Florence were the

amusement of the citizens, and the bulletins made Francesco and his hopes the laughing-stock of all Italy.

Francesco had ordered that all the chiefs of the different magistracies, the Archbishop of Florence, and the Bishop Abbioso, should be present at the birth. And this, it must be owned, looks very much as if he were sincere in his expectations, either duped by Bianca, as in the former case, or partaking in her error. He also wrote to the Cardinal, though in very ungracious terms, to invite his presence at Florence on the occasion. "Since the promotion (of Cardinals) is over," he wrote, "and there is nothing further to detain your Eminence in Rome, I will not neglect to tell you that the Grand Duchess advances in her pregnancy visibly from day to day, and with greater hope of a fortunate issue than ever. You can therefore come, if it so please you, and observe all that takes place. You have still the time to do so, and cannot now say afterwards, that you were left in ignorance upon the subject."*

But in answer to this hostilely worded invitation, and to a second letter written in the same tone, the Cardinal replied by an angry letter, absolutely refusing to come or to send any one to Florence on his behalf, "as he had no wish to see or hear more in the matter than the Grand Duke did himself, seeing that his Highness was the person chiefly interested."

That this was false we know with certainty from the Cardinal's correspondence with his brother, Don Pietro. He had been extremely anxious to obtain a better guarantee for the truth respecting the issue of Bianca's

* Printed by Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 8.

pregnancy than the Grand Duke's testimony. What then was the cause of this sudden change of tone? Are we to suppose that he had already taken his measures for being informed of the truth so satisfactorily as to feel that his own presence in Florence could be of no further use? Or had he convinced himself that no fraud was on this occasion intended?

And thus matters went on till December, in the year 1586, the time when, according to Bianca's calculations, her confinement ought to be near at hand. And all was still doubt and suspense. The four court physicians held different opinions on the great question. The highest obstetric authorities, summoned from all parts of Italy, were equally far from being unanimous. The courtiers, however, daily perceived increasing signs of the approach of the wished-for event. The Bishop Abbioso certified to having felt the movement of the expected stranger. His rivals in court favour strove to better his bidding for the sovereign's good graces by boldly predicting twins. Francesco kept horses ready saddled, and couriers booted, to carry the glad tidings in different directions the instant his hopes should be fulfilled. And all the Florence gossips the while were amusing themselves at the expense of the much hated prince, and the still more detested "witch," his wife, by unceasing volleys of satires, pasquinades, and unseemly jests. Till one fine morning the horses were unsaddled, the couriers permitted to retire, and the Florentines were informed that, after a fit of colic which had been so severe as to endanger her life, the person of the Grand Duchess had resumed its usual form.

It is impossible to arrive at any certainty of the truth respecting this incident of Bianca's career.

Bearing in mind, however, her previous performances, and the very potent reasons she had to find in some way an heir for the duchy,—remembering also Francesco's evident annoyance at the attention drawn to the matter by his brothers, and the arrangements made at the palace, the probability seems to be, that it was intended to introduce a supposititious child, as on the former occasion; that the vigilance and dexterity of the Cardinal compelled the sovereign conspirators to abandon the scheme as too dangerous; and that all Francesco's measures for security, publicity, and authenticating the birth, were merely blinds, under cover of which the tentative might be abandoned.

Soon after this event the Grand Duke and the Cardinal became once more apparently reconciled by the good offices of the Archbishop of Florence. Correspondence was resumed on a friendly footing; and now that there was no further question of the Grand Duke's having an heir, the two brothers could act together in schemes for the marriage of Don Pietro, who was all this time at the court of Spain, getting deeper every day into debt and into infamy by the outrageous profligacy of his conduct, and pretending to be taking steps, but in reality doing nothing, towards making some suitable marriage. Bianca, also, was, as she had never ceased to be since her marriage, all amiability and affability towards Ferdinando; and it was agreed that he should come to Florence, to visit his brother and sister-in-law, at the time of the "villeggiatura," the following September.

This "villeggiatura,"—the autumnal country-life portion of a town-loving Italian's year, when landed proprietors leave the city "palazzo," which is their family seat and residence, to spend a month, or perhaps two,

at their villa, and among their vineyards, and invite their friends to pass the "villeggiatura" with them, as an Englishman fills his house at Christmas,—this villeggiatura to which Ferdinando was invited by Francesco and Bianca, was to take place at Poggio-a-Cajano, one of the Grand Duke's numerous country residences. Notwithstanding its name—"Poggio,"—a hill, it is a low-lying spot on the banks of the Ombrone, at the foot of Monte Albano, about half way between Florence and Pistoia. The pleasure-grounds around the house are intersected by a great number of canals, many of which can hardly be correctly called streams, and altogether there is a great deal of water, more or less approaching to a stagnant condition in the immediate neighbourhood. It is, in short, a place which would be at once pronounced as very ineligible for an autumnal residence under an Italian sun, by any one possessed of the smallest smattering of sanitary science.

The Cardinal did not arrive in Florence till the beginning of October. He was received with all demonstrations of the most affectionate welcome; and the party proceeded at once, as had been planned, to Poggio-a-Cajano. The Archbishop of Florence, who had on more than one occasion acted as a mediator between the two brothers, accompanied them. The days, we read, were passed in sport among the surrounding hills and marshes, which abounded in game; and the evenings in conversations, in which the Archbishop and Bianca, who strove, apparently, in every way to render herself agreeable to her guest, did all they could to conciliate and soothe the two evil, though so different, natures of those brothers Medici.

The days that thus passed, however, could have

been but very few. And the remainder of the strange story, if restricted to such facts as are certain, and universally admitted, may be told with a brevity that will not appear more abrupt to the reader, than were the events sudden and startling to those who witnessed them.

On the 19th of October, about nine o'clock in the evening, the Grand Duke Francesco died. And on the following morning—(writers differ about the hour)—Bianca followed him.

Ferdinando succeeded without disturbance to the throne. Francesco was interred, by his orders, with all due pomp in the family mausoleum, under the dome of San Lorenzo; and Bianca was, also by his orders, thrown, wrapped in a sheet, into the common receptacle for the bodies of the poor, under the nave of that church.

These are the entire ascertainable facts of the case. But it will be interesting to examine the different opinions which have prevailed respecting them among Florentine historians; and, after weighing their conjectures, to judge for ourselves as to the balance of probabilities for or against them.

CHAPTER VIII.

Three hypotheses respecting the deaths of Francesco and Bianca—The official version of the story—The novelist's version of the story—A third possibility—Circumstances that followed the two deaths—Bianca's grave; and epitaphs for it by the Florentines—Ferdinand's final success.

As the record of all that can claim to be undoubted fact in the history of these strange events is startlingly brief, so would an account of all the suppositions, speculations, and conjectures, to which they have given rise, in perpetually succeeding crops from that time to this, be interminably long. Historians, apologists, antiquarians, archive-diggers, dramatists, novelists, have discussed and re-discussed the matter, settled it in different ways, according to their partialities or dispositions, and made up their minds to one or the other theory. But the only real result of their labours is the certainty, that the matter must rest in total uncertainty ever more, and that each reader must estimate for himself the probabilities of the case according to his own views and theories of human character, and its springs of action.

The different opinions that have been held respecting these mysterious deaths, may be reduced to the following three distinct hypotheses.

First. The Grand Duke died of a tertian fever, caught by exposing himself to great fatigue under the autumnal sun, and rendered fatal by his refusal to

submit to proper medical treatment, and his adoption in its place of a most preposterous system of ice-cold drinks and other applications, all acting on a constitution already ruined by previous excesses. Bianca died of a similar complaint, rendered fatal in her case also by the permanent mischief her system had suffered from all the tricks she had played upon it.

Second hypothesis. Bianca, who was in the habit of preparing, with her own hands, a certain tart or pastry of which the Grand Duke was fond, introduced poison into this dish, and, at supper, presented it to the Cardinal. The Cardinal declined to eat of it, being warned of the danger, add some, by the changing colour of the stone in a ring he wore for this purpose. But while the attention of Bianca was occupied with the Cardinal, the Grand Duke helped himself to some of his favourite dish, and before his wife could interfere to prevent him, had eaten a sufficient quantity to prove fatal. Bianca, seeing and comprehending at a glance all the consequences of this fatal blunder, proceeded to eat also of the poisoned food, thus at once creating a strong presumption against her own guilt, and avoiding all the evils, which she knew but too well would overwhelm her, if she survived her husband, by sharing his fate.

Third hypothesis. Francesco and Bianca both died by poison. But the poisoner was the Cardinal; who, while his victims were dying, prevented all access to them, and who was the person chiefly and beneficially interested in their death.

The first version is of course that of the accredited and official historians.* Galluzzi, in mentioning the

* See, in confirmation of his view, Appendix, art. II.

second supposition as that which had been popularly believed, says, that it was so only by those who were ignorant of the real facts of the case. But Galluzzi wrote his history by commission of the Grand Duke Peter Leopold, having been selected for the purpose, in consequence of the too great freedom, and too indiscreet disclosures of the history written by Martinetti,* and never published; because the Grand Duke being displeased with it on the above account, withdrew his patronage from the author, and transferred it to Galluzzi. And in histories written under these circumstances, sovereign princes commit no murders; or, if that is, as in the case of the Medici, unattainable by the most courtly writer, at all events, as few as possible.

Galluzzi, however, prints the following letter, which, *he says*, was written on the 16th of October to Rome. He does not tell us who was the writer:

"The Grand Duke has had two tertian fevers, one after the other; in fact, continual fever. He suffers from extreme thirst. Nevertheless, thus far the symptoms are favourable as regards ultimate recovery. The fourth and seventh days have been favourable, with a good perspiration; and we hope to go on improving. But he must not commit any imprudence; and, its being autumn, makes us fear that the recovery may be tedious. Therefore, cause prayers to be put up; and the more, because the Grand Duchess also has nearly the same malady, which increases the Grand Duke's sufferings, because she cannot attend him, and see to nursing him."

If this is a genuine letter, written on the 16th, it would be worth something towards deciding the

* Note 5.

question in favour of the first hypothesis. But it seems to be contradicted by a passage in that very curious document, previously cited, which Guerrazzi has printed at length in the notes to his "Isabella Orsini." This author himself, assuredly not prejudiced in favour of the Medici, speaking of this very important letter, which he states to be previously inedited, and generally unknown, and which is preserved in the Imperial Library at Paris, under the No. 10, O 74, says, "From this letter, evidently written by a person, satirical rather than otherwise, and but little favourable to the Medici, and especially to Francesco and to Bianca Capello, we learn how false is the notion that they were poisoned. The kind of life led by them needed no aid to insure their speedy death, since it is easy to perceive that they were in the habit of poisoning themselves daily."

I cannot, however, admit that the document in question proves any such thing. It proves certainly that its author, Giovanni Vettorio Soderini, writing apparently very shortly after the events, professes to accept, as it should seem, the statement officially put forth. Yet even this is hardly clear from the very strange manner and phraseology of the letter, which in its opening sentences appears intended to convey some meaning to the writer's correspondent, which is hidden from us. It runs thus: "When in these last days Death rode on his thin and ill-conditioned charger to invest himself with the title of Great.* Death obtained at Rome the title of Great, and having obtained this most indecent title, he rode in haste towards Poggio-a-Cajano, and there with irresistible force and equal

* The sentence is thus incomplete in the original.

valour, assaulted the Great Tuscan of Florence and Siena, and brought him down on the 19th of October, 1587, four and a half hours after sunset, and at forty-seven years of age deprived him of life, after strange and unusual writhings,* and much howling and groaning. He remained speechless from after dinner till the moment when he was seized with a most burning fever. Signor Pandolfo de' Bardi and Signor Troiano Boba have always asserted that he had caught a pleurisy from too great and unwonted fatigue," † rendered fatal, the writer goes on to say, by the strange and pernicious habits of life indulged in by the Grand Duke, which the letter proceeds to describe at great length.

Now here, in any case, the writer only repeats what the two courtiers Pandolfo de' Bardi, and Troiano Boba said, and does not pretend to any original knowledge on the subject. But may it not be possible that those strange opening sentences may be meant to convey a meaning which the writer dared not express clearly. If Ferdinando poisoned his brother, he rode from Rome to Poggio-a-Cajano to invest himself with the title of Great. If poison was prepared, or other arrangements for carrying out the crime were made at Rome, then he may be said to have obtained at Rome the title of Great, and it may be added that the title was "a most indecent one."

But further, this account of the death seems to contradict the statement of the letter published by Galluzzi, and cited above. The expressions seem to be incompatible with the supposition of an illness of several days. Finally, the mention of "strange and unusual contortions and much howling and groaning,"

* "Scontorcimenti."

† Note 6.

seem to indicate that some other cause of death than the natural result of a pleurisy was in the writer's mind.

It is further stated, in support of the supposition, that the death was natural, that the bodies were opened and examined after death; that of Bianca in the presence of her daughter and son-in-law. To this it may be remarked in the first place, that the medical science of the time was wholly incompetent to ascertain the cause of death from a post-mortem examination, as will be remarkably exemplified in the following pages of the life of Elizabetta Sirani. In the next place the examiners were the court physicians, in the pay and in the power of the new sovereign. And as to the presence of Pellegrina and Bentivoglio, the fact that Ferdinando should have sought to draw an evidence of his innocence of any foul practice from a circumstance so utterly useless and inconclusive as the presence of two persons wholly ignorant of anatomy and the action of poisons on the body, is rather a presumption against him than otherwise. He must have known perfectly well that had Bianca died by any poison whatever, Pellegrina and Bentivoglio could have been none the wiser for seeing the body opened.

In favour of either the second or third hypothesis there is no direct evidence whatever. If Ferdinando de' Medici had to be tried for the murder, he must according to all the evidence we have, be most undoubtedly acquitted. But nobody at the time seems to have believed in the two deaths having happened from natural causes. Then the popular hypothesis was the second. Notwithstanding the certificates of court physicians, the statements of the progress of the malady, and the post-mortem examinations, people

found it very difficult to believe that two such opportune deaths should occur all but simultaneously by natural causes, the assigned nature of which did not admit of any question of contagion. If anybody was so unlucky as to have conceived the idea, that this death might have "come riding" to Poggio-a-Cajano from Rome, of course he very carefully suppressed all utterance of it. But it was universally believed that Bianca was capable of any amount of treachery, craft, and crime. The story of the poisoned pastry, and the dramatic events it gave rise to, made exactly one of those narratives, rich in varied emotions and in retributive justice, which storytellers like to tell, and their audience like to hear. And it was perfectly safe to cast as much odium as any brain could imagine on the hated Bianca. To do so indeed was to fall in with the court humour, and to share the feelings of the new sovereign, who would never speak of her, or permit her to be spoken of as the late Grand Duchess, and who never himself named her otherwise, than as "the wretch Bianca,"—*la pessima Bianca.**

The second hypothesis therefore was the popular one among those who could not accept the official account of the matter as credible, and has continued to be the received version with the numerous novelists and dramatists who have made increment of the tragedy.

In favour of the third, it has been already admitted that no tittle of *direct* evidence can be produced. The value of the guess hazarded at the meaning conveyed in those enigmatical phrases at the commencement of Signor Soderini's letter will be different to different

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 8.

minds. Signor Guerrazzi, the discoverer and first editor of this extraordinary letter, has evidently not been struck by the idea that any such sense could be seen in the words. On the contrary, he considers the letter as conclusive against the poisoning, either by the Cardinal or by Bianca. But it may be stated on the other hand, that the interpretation above suggested has seemed probable to other Italians versed in the history of the time, and practised in extracting their secrets from the wrappages in which writers who lived under the survey of unscrupulous despots were commonly wont to conceal their meaning.

Further, in a subsequent part of this same letter, which is of great length, occupying no less than nineteen closely printed post octavo pages, there are statements which seem hardly compatible with the supposition that Francesco died of an illness, which gradually reached its conclusion at the end of several days.

"He—the Grand Duke—made no will either before, or at this time.* Only he signed an order for fifty thousand crowns to be distributed among the court servants. Father Maranto confessed him; and he tells me, that the Grand Duke did not specify the number of crowns to be distributed, but desired in general terms, that the servants should be remunerated, and that it grieved him that he could not live long enough to do it himself. The confessor *was not in time* to remind him, by asking if he wished to make any further provision for his friends; for he shut his eyes, and could neither move his tongue, nor shake his head."

Surely all these evidences of haste, and deficiency of time for the arrangement of matters, which the dying

* "Non fece testamento prima, nè poi."

man professes his wish to have settled, if a few more moments had been allowed him, are scarcely compatible with the supposition of an illness of several days.

At a subsequent page of his letter, Signor Soderini drops a few words respecting the new Grand Duke's manner some hours after the death of Francesco, which are not without their significance. He makes the number of hours which elapsed between the two deaths eleven only. Francesco's death at "four hours and a half after sunset," would have taken place according to our mode of keeping time between nine and ten. And at three in the morning, says the letter, the Cardinal left Bianca still living, "and at half-past seven arrived at the Prato gate." (He was therefore four hours and a half travelling twelve miles);—"where meeting the first Captain of the Lancers, he said doubtingly,* with fear, and a trembling voice,—as I suppose by reason of the suddenness of the change,—'Henceforward, Captain, you must be as faithful to me, as you have hitherto been to my brother.'"

Signor Soderini may attribute, since he deemed it safest to do so, the new Duke's trepidation and fear-marked manner to an innocent cause. But it can hardly but be felt, that such a manner is a weight in the scale against a man, when the probabilities of his having come fresh from the perpetration of fratricide are being balanced.

Then the question of motives must be taken into consideration; and it must be seen at once that the reasons Ferdinando had for wishing Bianca removed

* "Rispettosamente;" which means literally "respectfully," and not "doubtfully." But "respectful" does not describe the manner of a sovereign to a captain of his guards. The author's meaning evidently is "with a manner the reverse of security and boldness."

were of the very strongest nature. For the last ten years and more, she had been a constant thorn in his side, the ever recurring difficulty in all his schemes for aggrandising the family, the wreck of all his strivings for the support of the decorum and respectability of the Medicean name, and the ground of discord and hatred between him and his brother. She had made the Grand Duke the laughing-stock of Italy, and odious as well as contemptible to his own subjects. Her blood-stained practising had succeeded in foisting one base-born plebeian of alien blood into the family. She was continually attempting still worse frauds to wrong him of his birthright; and though by the exertion of extreme vigilance her schemes had been hitherto foiled, what possible security, short of her death, could be had against the success of future attempts of the same sort. A De. Medici, and a sixteenth century Cardinal may well have persuaded himself that he was justified under the circumstances, in adopting the only possible means of providing against such treason, pregnant with such results.

But his brother? Can it be shown that Ferdinando had sufficient motive to wish his brother's death, as to favour the probability that he was his murderer? It can only be said, that there was old hate between them, constantly stimulated and embittered by fresh provocations of the most galling sort on the part of the elder brother; hate, made more dangerous by the necessity for carefully suppressing all manifestation of it for long years of self-restraining dissimulation; that from the manner in which Francesco had received the proposals of a second marriage after the death of his first wife, there was very little room to hope that Bianca's death would be followed by any marriage,

which might put the prospects of the family on a satisfactory footing; that to have taken off Bianca and left her husband alive would have been an exceedingly dangerous step, for *then* the inquiries, the suspicions, the post-mortem examinations, and the investigations, would, of course, have been of a very different sort, and, under the circumstances, very difficult to deal with; that, finally, last, though far from least, Ferdinando was a De Medici.

That shrewd and sagacious old man, Pope Sixtus V., saw at once,* on hearing of what had happened, that suspicion of the double murder would fall on the Cardinal; and it may perhaps be said, without much chance of inaccuracy, that the balance of opinion among those most qualified to judge, has, in modern times, inclined in that direction.

But to return from the region of conjecture to that of historical certainty, a few words will suffice to tell all that remains of Bianca's story. As soon as the breath had left her body, the Bishop Abbioso, who had been left at Poggio-a-Cajano by Ferdinando, wrote to him:

"This instant, at eight o'clock—'quindici ore'—her Most Serene Highness the Grand Duchess passed to another life. The present messenger is sent in haste to receive the orders of your Highness as to the disposition of her body."

Orders were sent back that the body should "*be kept intact till the evening,*" and then opened, as has been said. The same night it was buried, "so that no memorial of her should remain;" the new sovereign's reply to the application for orders on this head being, "We will have none of her among our dead!"

* Galluzzi. Lib. 4, ch. 8.

The hatred of the Florentines for both Francesco and Bianca was intense. If anything, the latter was yet more detested than her husband. In addition to all the grounds of hatred common to both of them, she was a foreigner, and "a witch," a practiser of black art. And this accusation, more than aught else, made the burden of the abuse that was heaped upon her. Of course, it was not safe to say much of the deceased sovereign. But satirists, libellers, pasquinade-writers, and epigraph-mongers, had full licence to exercise their wit at the expense of the "pessima Bianca."

Here are specimens of their expressions of the popular estimate of her, which were current in the city immediately after her death. They are taken from the same letter of Signor Soderini, so often quoted:

"Qui giace in un avel pien di malie
E pien di vizi la Bianca Cappella,
Bagasica, strega, maliarda e fella,
Che sempre favorì furfanti e spie."

In English:

"Here in a grave, brimful of vices foul
And evil sorceries, Bianca lies,
A huzzy, witch, and mistress of fell spells;
In life the dearest friend of rogues and spies."

Another runs as follows:

"In questa tomba, in questa oscura buca
Ch' è fossa a quei che non hanno sepoltura,
Opra d' incanti, e di malie fattura
Giace la Bianca, moglie del Granduca."

Which may stand, if the absence of the rhyme be excused, in English thus:

"Within this tomb, this undistinguished hole,
The grave of those who sepulture have none,
That worker of black arts and evil charms,
Bianca lies, the wife of our Grand Duke."

The Cardinal Ferdinando succeeded to his brother's throne without disturbance or difficulty; slipped off his priesthood by dispensation, seeing that it was for the benefit of mankind that he should do so; manifested, as Sismondi says,* "as much talent for government as is compatible with the absence of all virtue, and as much pride, as can exist without nobility of mind;" merited the affection of his subjects by taking off, among sundry mint and cumin dues, the tax upon cat's meat;† married Cristina, daughter of Charles Duke of Lorraine, and succeeded in accomplishing the great and beneficent task of preserving the Medicean stock to Italy and mankind.

* Hist. Rep. Ital., ch. 123.

† Letter of Soderini.—Guerrazzi's Isabella Orsini.

OLYMPIA PAMFILI.

(1594—1656.)

Pope Joan rediviva—Olympia's outlook on life—Her mode of "opening the oyster"—She succeeds in opening it—Olympia's son—Olympia at home in the Vatican—Her trade—A Cardinal's escape from the purple—Olympia under a cloud—Is once more at the head of the field—And in at the death—A conclave—Olympia's star wanes—Pœna pede claudo.

In the ninth century, the outlying Catholic world to the north of the Alps was horrified by reports, that a woman was occupying the chair of Peter, and the office of Heaven's vicegerent. A fact so scandalous and so extraordinary found ready credence among the monks and prelates of Germany. The reports of pious pilgrims who had returned from Rome, and testified that Christ's church was governed by a woman, were cited with every appearance of good faith and authenticity. And the story of Pope Joan, thus generated, rapidly acquired a world-wide acceptation, and was for ages believed, both within and without the pale of the Church, as a veritable historical fact. And a vast mass of learned, satirical, controversial, scandalous, and antiquarian letter-press has resulted from it.

But the huge fiction, which grew to be so large and so strong as to require the united efforts of several able literary men armed with many heavy volumes to kill it, was, like so many another dangerous mistake,

a very small and innocent error at its birth. The pious pilgrim *had* come back from Rome. He *had* brought with him a whole budget of stories of the scandalous corruptions and wickedness he had witnessed in the metropolis of Christendom. He *had* asserted, and probably frequently repeated, that a female ruled the Church. He *had* asserted the astounding fact, that a woman was now Pope of Rome. And the scandalised reporter of the abominations he had witnessed in that far distant southern land across the mountains, spoke with all sincerity. He little dreamed of letting loose a falsehood, which as soon as ever it had escaped from "the enclosure of his teeth," as old Homer says, forthwith began to race with unovertakeable swiftness round the world, like the unbagged demon of a mediæval goblin-story. He simply spoke figuratively. And his simple-minded, untravelled, wonder-loving auditor or auditors received his words literally.

That was all! But with what a mass of infinitely more deadly error has that same little difference between the speaker and his hearers, filled the world!

The ninth century pilgrim merely intended to convey to his hearers, in the strongest manner he could, the fact that the Pontiff was so wholly influenced and governed by a woman, that she held all the power in her hands, and *might be said*, indeed, to be Pope herself, rather than the weak puppet who was her slave.

And if in the seventeenth century communications between one part of the world and another had been as rare and as difficult as in the ninth; if men had been then as ignorant, as simple, and greedy of the marvellous; if the press, which is to such error what

a terrier is to a rat, had not been in existence, the historians of Europe might have chronicled a second she-pontiff, the "Pope Olympia," as having ascended the papal throne in the year 1644. For assuredly no John, Benedict, nor Boniface of the worst and darkest age of the Church ever lived more scandalously under petticoat government, or gave greater occasion to the assertion, that a woman was the real Pope in his stead, than did Giovanni Batista Pamfili, who was elected in that year.

Pope Olympia was born in 1594, at Viterbo. A daughter of the noble and ancient, but poor, family of the Maidalchini, she was, as the daughters of impoverished nobles generally were, destined for the Church from her infancy, and educated in a convent. But as this branch of the ecclesiastical profession could lead to nothing, at the best, more exalted than the station of a lady Abbess, Donna Olympia, who felt herself to have a soul above bead-counting, intimated, with a firmness and decision all her own, her intention of marrying. And an alliance was accordingly formed for her with a provincial gentleman, as noble and as poor as herself. As Giovanni Batista Pamfili, afterwards Pope by the name of Innocent X., was past eighty when he died in 1655, and must accordingly have been born in or before the year 1575; and as his brother, Donna Olympia's husband, must have been an elder brother, it follows that this poor noble, whom the ambitious and shrewd lady chose to wed, rather than accept the nullity of a cloister life, was more than nineteen years her senior. Nor does it appear that he had any requisite, either of station, function, or talent, which might have seemed capable of affording assistance to Olympia's views of rising in the world.

But the noble Roman maiden, who had already, we are told, given a specimen of her talent for governing, by exerting sway over her companions in the convent seminary, had looked out on the Roman world with a shrewd and observant eye, and knew well what she was about. What had the poor country noble to render him worthy of Olympia's hand and adapted to her views? He had a brother. Men who marry don't rise in the ecclesiastical states. And you can't marry a Cardinal, nor even a Bishop. Yet to hook yourself more or less indissolubly on to something of this sort, is the only possible means by which "excelsior" aspirations can be gratified in the world of Rome.

Man, even when tonsured and gowned, was not made to live alone. And although sacerdotal policy has with marvellous success contrived to cut off its priests from the great family of mankind, fence out their hearts from all the most sanctifying and ennobling sympathies of humanity, and make their interests, affections, prejudices, ambitions, always distinct from, and often hostile to those of their fellow-creatures;—though all this has with fatal skill been accomplished by the ordinance of celibacy; still in this, as in every other case of battle with the laws of nature, the measure of success accomplished does not attain to the reversal of these laws; but is limited to causing them to operate evilly instead of beneficially for mankind.

The priest-world of Rome accordingly, while deprived of the legitimate and beneficial influence of woman, has in most ages been more subjected than other social systems to her abnormal and mischievous power. And Donna Olympia was perfectly well aware, that the needful hooking-on process above

mentioned might be accomplished with sufficient solidity for her purpose without any coupling gear of Hymen's forging.

But, as injury, done to any wheel or spring of a beautiful piece of mechanism, deranges the working of the whole, fatally in proportion to the perfection of the entire contrivance, so the celibacy law in its fight against nature turns other portions of human passion to evil issues, which otherwise and elsewhere work to good. The sacred family tie, which in other communities produces so much that is great and virtuous, becomes the abomination of nepotism at Rome, and affords the only other channel besides the one alluded to above, by which the grandeurs and pomps and wealth of sacerdotal success can be made available to the weaker sex.

To command, therefore, both these avenues to the temple of Fortuna Sacerdotalis—to hang on to the gown by both these ties of connection—to contrive by one step to obtain the means of action in both these ways—this was the master-stroke, which the high-looking Roman maiden accomplished by her marriage with the poor and no longer young noble to whom she gave her hand. The husband with his poverty-stricken coronet was in himself altogether useless to his aspiring wife's ambitious views. But of a brother-in-law with the tonsure, something might be made. A priest, noble, not without capacity, unburdened with scruples, already employed in some subaltern affairs, of malleable material—give her such an one for an ally, and the papal court for an arena, and Donna Olympia felt, that she could do the rest.

It is curious, and characteristic of Roman life and literature, that we are unable to ascertain what manner of

man, as to outward appearance, was this "onestissimo vice-marito,"* to whom Olympia thus united herself. Hatreds run high at Rome. And though material daggers are not wanting there on occasion, the natural instinct of gowned nature is to *speak* them. The Church, as we know, abhors blood, and her sons wear no swords. But bloodless calumny is a quiet, decorous weapon, always at hand, perfectly compatible with sacerdotal proprieties, and unsparingly used accordingly to gratify partisan rancour, in a state of society in which every man's hopes and fortunes depend on party successes or failures. The historical value of Roman contemporary writers, therefore, is often very doubtful. And even in a matter so unimportant, so matter-of-fact, and so easily ascertainable as to the stature of a Pope, we are left in uncertainty by the conflicting statements of his contemporaries. While those, who profited by and therefore approved of the election of Innocent X., represent him as a man of tall stature and majestic port, dignified in bearing, and of venerable aspect, the greater number who suffered by, and hated him, assure us that he was short, deformed, and hideously ugly in feature.

The discrepancy in testimony is more valuably instructive than certain information on the subject in dispute would have been.

No such doubt, however, obscures the fact, that his career abundantly justified the wisdom of Donna Olympia's speculation. Between them they accomplished what certainly neither of them would have been able to do asunder. The partnership was a

* Giusti. The stinging satires of this Tuscan poet, who died a few years since in the prime of life, should be read by those who wish to obtain a just notion of the lights and shades of modern Italian life.

highly "successful" one. Acting with wise docility, entirely by his able sister-in-law's advice, the rising churchman soon became a man of note; was employed in various affairs of state; charged with a diplomatic mission to Spain (which though directed, as far as letters could avail, by Olympia, yet led the diplomatist to complain, that things did not go so well with him without her at his side); and, finally, was made Cardinal in 1629, when he was about fifty-four, and she thirty-five years of age.

Olympia's foot had thus gained the first round of the ladder, which might lead her to the consummation of her highest hopes. But the climbing was arduous! Now was the time to put forth all her ability, her knowledge of the Roman world, and of priestly nature.

It was fifteen years from Pamfili's nomination to the purple, to his election to the papacy. And these years were to be spent, under his guardian angel's tutorship, in carefully studied appearances and unsleeping vigilance. His life was to be a continual canvassing, without permitting the smallest appearance of overt candidateship for the great prize to appear.

To be chosen the infallible head of Christ's church, to hold the power of the keys, and be Heaven's vicegerent on earth, he of all the Christians on it!—how was he to cause such a choice to fall on him?—how appear to be the best, the most devout, the wisest, the most learned, or even the ablest man for the purpose? Donna Olympia knew better than to suppose that it was necessary or even desirable to appear anything of all this. She knew that there would be candidates in the conclave relying on none of such good gifts, but solely on the backing of the great powers of Europe. She knew that her candidate

would not be looked to by either of these pope-making monarchs. But she knew also, that their influence might neutralise the power of each other, and that in such a case some man, who was obnoxious to no party, feared by none, and deemed a safe compromise by all, might have a very promising chance of finding himself elected, as many a Pope has been on the *pis-aller* principle.

This was the game which the shrewd Olympia played and won. When the great Barberini Pope, Urban VIII., died, after a long papacy of twenty-one years, neither of the great parties in Europe, as represented by their friends and creatures among the Cardinals, was strong enough to make its own Pope in spite of the determined opposition of its opponent. The Conclave was at a dead lock. And at last a compromise was found in the election of Innocent X., then seventy, or all but seventy years old. The real acting Pope, Olympia, was just fifty.

There were eleven years of harvest-time before her for the gathering in of the crop, which she had spent her life in assiduously preparing. The time might easily have been less, and she could scarcely have expected that it should be more; for the new Pope was already an infirm man, and Olympia lost no time in making her hay while the Roman sun shone!

Her husband had died some time previously, leaving her one son, the Prince Camillo, who was forthwith made a Cardinal. The step was a strange one, and quite in discord with the ordinary traditions of Roman family policy. For Camillo was the sole scion of the Pamfili race, at least of the descendants of the Pope's father; and, though the purple might lead to more immediate personal distinction, the continuation

of the family name was cut off by this means, and the usual master passion of an ambitious Italian noble frustrated. The making Camillo a Cardinal, moreover, seemed still more unaccountable, when the personal qualities of the young man were considered. For he was so wholly uneducated, and incapable, that not even a Papal uncle could succeed in thrusting greatness upon him. His nomination thus took from him the capability of serving the family interests in the only way in which he was available, by continuing the race and the name; while it exposed him and his uncle and mother to a host of mortifications arising from his gross and even rustic incapacity. The total incompetence and stupidity manifested by him, when it was attempted to entrust to his hands any of the business that usually fell to the lot of a Cardinal nephew, was such as to cause constant trouble and humiliation to Innocent, who, we read, rarely met him without irritable chidings.

The motive of this ill-judged promotion is to be found probably in the peculiar nature of Olympia's ambition. Unlike other Italian ambitions, which almost always concentrated themselves on the building up or aggrandising a family name, that of Donna Olympia seems to have been wholly personal; the love of power, and still more strongly the love of wealth, for the sake of her own individual enjoyment of them.

Fifteen centuries of Papal government had habituated mankind to see without surprise in Heaven's vicar on earth an amount of dereliction of duty, and an enormity of distance between profession and practice, such as has never been recorded in history, or exhibited to the world in any other department of its

affairs. Yet Europe was startled at the novelty of the position assumed by Olympia immediately on Innocent's elevation. When, according to Roman custom, as soon as the election of the new Pope was known, the populace rushed to his palace to make permitted plunder of its contents, the lady Olympia received them, and flung open the doors to them—having, as we are told, first taken the precaution of removing all that was of much value, in anticipation of the event. She accompanied the new Pope to the Vatican, and established herself there as its mistress! No step of domestic government or foreign policy decided on, no grace, favour, or promotion accorded, no punishment inflicted, was the pontiff's own work. His invaluable sister-in-law did all. He was absolutely a puppet in her hands. The keys of St. Peter were string to her girdle; and the only function in which she probably never interfered, was blessing the people!

The great object of her unceasing care and diplomacy was, to keep at a distance from Innocent every person and every influence which could either lessen her own, or go shares in the profits to be extracted from it. For this, after all, was the great and ultimate scope of her exertions. To secure the profits of the papacy in hard cash; this was the problem. No appointment to office of any kind was made, except in consideration of a proportionable sum paid down into her own coffers. This often amounted to three or four years revenue of the place to be granted. Bishoprics and benefices were sold as fast as they became vacant. One story is related of an unlucky disciple of Simon, who, on treating with the Popess for a very valuable see, just fallen vacant, and hearing from her a price, at which it might be

his, far exceeding all that he could command, persuaded the members of his family to sell all they had for the purpose of making this profitable investment. The price was paid, and the bishopric was given him; but with a fearful resemblance to the case of Ananias, he died within the year; and his ruined family saw the see a second time sold by the insatiable and incorrigible Olympia. The incident only served her as a hint always to exact cash down; and not to content herself with a yearly payment from the accruing revenue. The criminal judges in Rome were directed to punish criminals of all degrees in purse instead of person; and the fines all were paid over with business-like exactitude to the all-powerful favourite.

As Innocent became older and rapidly more infirm, the incapability of his nephew became more and more a source of complaint and annoyance to him. And the young man himself seems to have been weary of a position, which exposed him to ceaseless objurgations and to the contempt of all Rome. For the escape from it, which he effected, appears to have been of his own plotting. This was nothing less than the resignation of his Cardinal's hat, obtaining a release from holy orders, and marrying the recently widowed Princess Rosano, one of the largest fortunes, and most desirable matches in Rome. So anxious was Innocent, it would seem, to get rid of his nephew from the court, that he dared to conspire with him to effect this scheme without the knowledge of Donna Olympia. It was accomplished with all speed and secrecy. And Camillo had to tell his mother that he was neither cardinal nor priest any longer, but the husband of the beautiful and wealthy Princess

Rosano. "Olympia's rage was extreme; the more so, because she feared that the Princess, who was known as a woman of much capacity, as well as of great beauty, might not impossibly supplant her at the Vatican. But Innocent had no thought of liberating himself from his servitude; and was only too glad to make amends for his share of what had been done, and obtain peace by banishing his nephew and new niece from Rome. As there was nothing in the marriage with the Princess that might not have naturally seemed to the pontiff extremely desirable for his nephew, the Roman gossips were not a little astonished at seeing the Pope's nephew, and the favourite's son, an exile.

Meantime, the discontent of Rome, the remonstrances of the Cardinals, and the contempt and indignation of foreign courts was beginning to render the position of Innocent and Olympia hardly tenable. One day a large medal was conveyed into the Pope's hands, on the obverse of which was represented Olympia, with the pontifical tiara on her head, and the keys in her hand: while the reverse showed Innocent in a coif with a spindle and distaff in his hands. Another day a report was brought to him from England, that a play had been represented before Cromwell, called "The Marriage of the Pope," in which, Donna Olympia is represented rejecting his addresses on account of his extreme ugliness, till, having in vain offered her one of the keys to induce her to consent, he attains his object at the cost of both of them. The Emperor again had said to the Papal Nuncio, "Your Pope, my lord, has an easy time of it, with Madame Olympia to put him to sleep."

Driven by these and many other such manifes-

tations of public feeling, Innocent determined to make a great effort. He announced to Olympia with every expression of regret for the hard necessity, that she must quit the Vatican; and knowing well what he would have to endure, if he exposed himself to her reproaches and entreaties, he forbade her to come for the future into his presence.

But the weak and infirm old man had far over-calculated his moral strength. The prop, on which he had relied during the years of his best vigour, could not be voluntarily relinquished now in the time of his decrepitude. Very soon Olympia obtained permission to make secret visits to the Vatican. These were made generally every night; and this nightly secret coming and going at untimely hours, threatened to become more ridiculous, if not more seriously scandalous, in the eyes of the lampooning Roman world, than an acknowledged residence in the Vatican. Besides they did not adequately meet the necessities of the case. Olympia pointed out to the infirm old man that her constant care and superintendence was necessary to his personal comfort—perhaps to his safety. So Rome very shortly saw the "papessa" once again in her old home at the Vatican.

And, as from the nature of the circumstances must necessarily have been the case, her power and entire disposal of the functions and revenues of the papacy was more absolute than ever.

But the rapidly declining health of Innocent warned her that her time was short. And prudence might have counselled her to make some preparation for the storm, which she must have well known she would have to face after his death, by moderating, if not relinquishing the corrupt and oppressive practices of

all sorts, which were daily added in the minds of the Romans to the long account against her. Her observation of the world had however suggested to her a different policy. If more danger had to be encountered, more money would be needed to meet it. Donna Olympia's faith in the omnipotence of money was unbounded. Only let her have money-power enough; and she doubted not that she should be able to ride out the storm.

So she applied herself with more energy and assiduity than ever to the two objects which shared her entire care—the collection of cash by the most unblushing and audacious rapine and venality; and the keeping the breath of life to the last possible instant within the sinking frame of the old pontiff. The latter task was so important, that both for the insuring of proper attention, and for providing against the danger of poison, she kept the Pope almost under lock and key, attending to his wants with her own hands, and allowing him to touch no food that had not been prepared under her own eyes. During the last year of his life, she literally hardly ever quitted him. Once a week, we read, she left the Vatican, secretly by night, accompanied by several porters carrying sacks of coin, the proceeds of the week's extortions and sales, to her own palace. And, during these short absences, she used to lock the Pope into his chamber, and carry the key with her!

It would be easy to collect from the many biographies that have been written of Donna Olympia, a great number of anecdotes of her frauds, simoniacal dealings, selling of pardons, and the like. But most of these writings have very little of the character of historical authority. Some of them are anonymous,

and appear to be rather collections of the scandal and gossip of the time in Rome, than authenticated statements of facts. One there is by the well-known Gregorio Leti, writing under the name of "the Abate Gualdi," which has been translated into French. But the general outline of Olympia's career is sufficiently certain; and the various stories in question are all to the same purpose, and contribute no additional features to the picture.

At last the end was visibly at hand. During the last ten days of his life, the Pope's mind was wholly gone. And in these ten days, by rapidly selling off for what she could get for them nominations to vacant benefices and "Prelature," Olympia is said to have amassed half a million of crowns! Her last transaction was with a Canon who had been some time previously in treaty with her for a "Prelatura." He had offered fifty, while she had stood out for eighty thousand crowns; and the bargain had gone off. In the last hours of Innocent's life, she sent for this man, and told him she would take his fifty thousand. He said he had dissipated twenty thousand of the sum since that time, and had only thirty thousand left. "Well!" said the unblushing dealer, "since you can do no better, hand them over, and you shall have the Prelatura." So the money was paid, and the nomination obtained from the dying Pope, *in extremis*.

Innocent died on the 7th of January, 1655. Olympia caused the proper notices to be given to the officials, and immediately left the Vatican, and retired to her own palace secretly. She had employed the two nights previous to his death in transporting valuables thither to a great amount.

And now came for Olympia the great crisis of her

fate. Her position was certainly a terrible one. The instant the Pope's death was known, a storm of long pent up hatred broke forth in execrations, accusations, and threats, on all sides. Olympia was under no delusion, as to her situation, and the general feeling of Rome towards her. She knew how much and how justly she was hated. She knew that she had been guilty of crimes abundantly sufficient to put not only her wealth, but her life in danger; and that a thousand tongues were ready to bear undeniable witness against her.

But Olympia was very far from giving up the game as lost. She had enormous command of money; she was well acquainted with the secret motives and wishes of parties in Rome; thoroughly skilled in the subtle underhand tactics of trading on every evil passion, which is what is meant by policy in that ecclesiastical world; and imbued with that profound faith in the thorough meanness and baseness of the highest as well as the lowest of mankind, which people of her stamp consider to be knowledge of the world. Though hated by the great majority of Cardinals as well as by the people of Rome, she was not without friends and creatures. Corrupt motives of interest had enabled her some time previously to Innocent's death, to make alliance with the powerful faction of the Barberini. And thus strong in these arms and means of defence, she sat in the privacy of her palace—(for to have appeared in the streets of Rome, especially during the lawless period of an interregnum, would have been extremely dangerous) and directed the intrigues, by means of which she counted on escaping the consequences of the universal indignation.

Three degrees of successful issue had to be striven for by her. The first, of which she still nourished sanguine hopes, was that she might again appear on the public stage influential and powerful. The second, that the past might be buried in oblivion, and she might be left in the quiet though obscure enjoyment of her immense wealth. The third, that even if she were compelled to disgorge a great part, or even the whole of it, she might yet be safe in person.

All these issues, of course, depended on the election of a new Pope. And when the disposition towards her of the great body of the Cardinals is remembered, it seems strange that she could have had any hope as to the result. She contrived, however, to form an independent party in the Conclave, which was known in Rome at the time as "the flying squadron"—*squadrone volante*, the avowed object of which was, to enable either of the other contending parties to elect any pope, who would secure Olympia's safety, and to impede the election of an enemy. And the clever management of this *squadron* kept the Cardinals imprisoned for three months.

At length wearied out by this long confinement, and convinced of the impossibility of electing either of the favourite candidates of the leading parties, the Conclave was driven in despair to the *pis-aller* of electing one recommended only by his good character and apparent fitness for the office. This was Fabio Chigi of Siena, who became Pope, as Alexander the Seventh, with the consent of the squadrone volante, who thought that, as he had been raised to the purple by Innocent, and was considered a moderate man, he would not be likely to molest the "relict" of his old patron.

Olympia was well satisfied with the result of the election. It seems never to have occurred to her or her friends, that the new Pope might demand a strict account from her, merely from considerations of abstract right and justice. She sent among the first to compliment him on his accession; and shortly asked for an audience. The answer was not calculated to reassure her. Alexander sent her word that it was not his intention to receive ladies, except on urgent matters of business. Still determined not to give up the game, she repeated her application to be allowed to speak with his Holiness, with increased urgency; but she only obtained the still more alarming reply, that "Donna Olympia had had but too much conversation with Popes, and that she must understand, that things would henceforth be very different."

So much time elapsed, however, before any step was taken with regard to her, that Olympia, though convinced that all hope of further influence on public affairs was out of the question, yet imagined that she was to be let alone with her enormous hoards; but Alexander, unwilling to incur the blame of acting passionately or hastily on the subject, was listening to the innumerable proofs of her ill-doings, and quietly making up his mind on the matter. Meantime it was debated by Olympia and her friends, whether her most prudent course would be to quit Rome, to go, say, to Loreto, on pretext of a pilgrimage; but the heirs of the wretched woman, and especially her son Camillo, feeling that however such a course might secure her person, it would in all probability lead to the confiscation of her wealth, persuaded her that such a step was an unwise admission of guilt, and that her case was not so hopeless.

Suddenly an order reached her to quit Rome within three days, and to be at Orvieto within eight. It came upon her like a thunderbolt; for she felt that it was the beginning of the end.

A commissary was sent after her thither to require a strict account from her of all the state monies that had passed into her hands, immediate restitution of the jewels and other valuables carried off by her from the Vatican, and her answer to the innumerable charges against her of selling offices, benefices, and pardons.

She answered by general denials, and by asserting, that whatever money had passed through her hands had been paid over by her to Innocent.

The next step, it was expected, would have been her imprisonment. But at this stage of the business an unexpected and terrible ally stepped in to save—not the miserable woman herself—but at least her infamously gotten wealth to the Pamfili family. This ally was the pestilence, which invaded Italy, and especially Rome, with such violence, that it threw other matters into abeyance, by concentrating on itself all the care and attention of Alexander and his government.

But the pestilence, which thus saved her money-bags, did not spare her to the enjoyment of them; for on its appearance in Orvieto, Olympia was one of the first victims.

No further steps were taken by the government in the matter; and Camillo Pamfili, her son, inherited quietly the almost incredible sums she had amassed. It was said that, besides the vast estates which she had acquired, and an immense amount of precious stones, and gold uncoined, more than two millions of crowns in money were found in her coffers.

Such was the story of the second female Pope,

who has grasped St. Peter's keys. And if a similar scandal has not reproduced itself in an equal degree of intensity, it is one to which the peculiar constitution of the Papal government and society, must be ever especially liable.

ELISABETTA SIRANI.

(1638—1665.)

CHAPTER I.

HER LIFE.

In the vast and magnificent church of the Dominicans at Bologna, in the handsome chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, there is a modest sepulchre belonging to the ancient Guidotti family, which attracts as large a share of the art-loving pilgrim's notice, as even the world-famous shrine of the founder of the order with its statues and bas-reliefs by Niccolo di Pisa, Afonso Lombardo, and Michael Angelo. For there beneath the same stone were laid the bodies of Guido Reni and Elisabetta Sirani; he full of years and honours, at the ripe age of sixty-seven; she cut off untimely in the morning of her working day at twenty-six. She was no "favourite pupil" of his, as has been written,* for Guido died, when Sirani was four years old; but her works are interesting to the art-student, as far more accurate embodiments of the traditions of his school, than the pictures of most of those who were his immediate pupils; and her short career is especially worthy of the notice of such as are

* Guide Book to Central Italy.

interested in observing female capabilities for winning a right to a place on the roll of the world's worthies.

The art-critics assure us that her works are stamped with a vigour, and bold free precision of outline, which have been rarely attained by female artists. "It is indeed a wonderful thing," writes Lanzi,* "that a young girl, who lived only six-and-twenty years, should have painted the vast number of pictures recorded by Malvasia†; still more so, that she should have perfected them with a care and finish of the highest order; and most wonderful of all, that she should have reached this perfection in historical pieces of large size, in a style free from that timidity, which La Fontana, and other painters of her sex, never got rid of."

It would be easy to multiply citations from the best authorities on art, to prove the high degree of excellence in her vocation attained by this girl, at an age when most of her competitors of the stronger sex were climbing the first steps of the ladder. But taking this for granted, and leaving the critical appreciation of her works to those whose studies lead them specially in that direction, it will be more interesting for us to endeavour to make out for ourselves some tolerably life-like representation of the young worker as she lived and laboured a couple of hundred years ago in her home at Bologna.

The picture ought to be, if presented aright, a singularly pleasing one, healthy in its tone, invigorating in its suggestions, and addressing itself vividly to the

* Storia Pittorica, vol. v. p. 97, edit. 4to.

† Lanzi should have written "recorded by herself;" for Malvasia, the historian of Bolognese art, merely prints a catalogue, left by the artist in her own handwriting.

sympathies of every admirer of honest energetic labour. Of all the types of female character and life gathered in these volumes from various social conditions, differing every one of them so widely from our own, this artist figure seems to claim the closest kin to some living phases of the life around us, and to be the most readily and advantageously transplantable into our own social system.

The story of Elisabetta Sirani's untimely death has added a sort of melodramatic interest to her name, which was not needed to make her life a noticeable one. Every one who has heard her mentioned has heard that she died by poison. Her contemporaries suspected that she might have been poisoned; the following generation said and wrote, that she probably had been thus destroyed; and Lanzi, and after him the manuals, and other common sources of information, content themselves with simply stating that she was poisoned, without expressing any doubt on the subject. The reader of the following pages will see that there is every reason to think that she died from natural causes. The circumstances of her death, however, and the judicial investigations to which they gave rise, will furnish some of those little traits of the artist-family's home and mode of life, which, far too trifling ever to have been recorded as such by contemporaries, are yet in every case more precious in their suggestiveness than facts of greater importance to those who, at a distance of a couple of centuries, seek to catch a glimpse of any life as it passed amid its ordinary every-day environment.

The records of the judicial proceedings to which Elisabetta's death gave rise, were for many years sought for in vain by various writers on subjects connected

with Bolognese art-history. The name of the person accused of the crime was unknown. And for want of this indication it was, it seems, impossible, without searching the entire mass of the archives in question, to find the required papers. At last, however, in 1833, Signor Mazzoni Toselli had the good fortune to light on them, and published the result of his discovery in a small pamphlet printed at Bologna in that year. Since that time another fortunate discovery has brought to light the "conclusions" submitted to the court by the advocate employed for the prosecution, as we should say. This document was not found in company with the records discovered by Signor Toselli; but was put before the world by Signor Ulisse Guidi, in a pamphlet printed at Bologna in 1854. So that, besides obtaining from the evidence of the witnesses examined, those little hints above alluded to of the manner of life led in the "Casa Sirani," we have now the means of forming a tolerably well-grounded opinion as to the real cause of the young artist's death.

The house of Giovanni Andrea Sirani in the Via Urbana at Bologna, was the home of a family of artists. The father was himself at the head of a considerable school, in which Guido's second manner was the standard of excellence aimed at, and by the master himself and some of his scholars attained with very respectable success. He had a son who became a physician. But he was the only deserter from the family profession. The three daughters, Elisabetta, Barbara, and Anna Maria were all artists. The name of the elder has cast that of her sisters and even of her father, into the shade. But his works are still well esteemed in his own city; and there are pictures

by Barbara and Anna Maria Sirani in the churches of Bologna.

Giovanni's wife Margherita, and his sister, who cooked for the family, together with a female servant, were the other members of his household. We are told also, that Bartolommeo Zanichelli, Antonio Donzelli, and Giulio Banzi, his pupils, lived with him upon the footing of members of his family. The first had "frequented his school" for fifteen years.

The house in the Via Urbana, which accommodated this numerous family, and gave the seven painters, out of the ten persons who occupied it, room to work in, must have been a good sized one. It consisted, we hear, of two stories, with some large rooms above "for the school."

The sort of industry that prevailed in this hive of workers may be estimated from the list of Elisabetta's works extant in her own hand-writing. Her rapidity, it is true, was marvellous, and the sureness of her hand was only equalled by the overflowing abundance of her thought. We must not, therefore, imagine that all the members of this busy art-factory contributed to the general production in a similar degree. Making due allowance for this, however, and remembering that Elisabetta's works were always highly finished, her methodical and business-like list will give us some idea of the family produce.

In the year 1655, which is the first that figures on her catalogue,—and she was then only seventeen,—she painted two pictures, one for the Marchese Spada, and one for the Municipality of Trassano. In the year 1656, five pictures. In 1657, seven pictures. In 1658, twelve pictures. In 1659, ten pictures. In 1660, fourteen pictures. In 1661, fourteen pictures, of which

one ordered by the nuns of St. Catherine contained half figures of the size of life of the twelve Apostles. In 1662, forty-nine pictures! Either by an error of the pen these forty-nine works were the product of two years' labour, which is probable, or the year 1663 from some unexplained cause, produced nothing. In the year 1664, we find twenty-eight pictures registered. And in the first half of 1665, the year of her death, she had completed nine works. In the nine years and a half, from the seventeenth to the twenty-sixth of her age, she had thus produced a hundred and fifty pictures,* many of them of large size, and all of them carefully finished! Besides this, she etched occasionally; and many works of this class from her hand are known to, and much sought by collectors. A record of work honestly and conscientiously done, as Lanzi may well say, truly wonderful!

Her rapidity of execution, and especially of throwing with a sure unerring hand her first ideas upon the canvas, was so remarkable, that to see Elisabetta paint was considered one of the sights at Bologna most worthy of the attention of strangers. And we find that few personages of distinction passed through the city without paying a visit to the artist family in the Via Urbana.

"On the 13th of May, 1664," she records in the list of works, which seems also to have served as a sort of journal, "His Serene Highness Cosmo, crown prince of Tuscany, came to our house to see me paint, and I worked at a picture of the Prince Leopold his uncle in his presence. Alluding to the three special virtues of that great family" — (Poor Elisabetta!) — "of Justice,

* The list, however, is not complete, as there are pictures by her extant, which are not enumerated in it.

Charity, and Prudence, I introduced figures of them into the picture, sketching in the infant whom Charity is nursing, very quickly, while the prince stood by. On leaving me, he ordered a Holy Virgin for himself, which I executed in time for him to take with him, when he returned to Florence. It is in an oval, with the child in the mother's lap, who with his left hand is caressing her, while the right, with an olive-branch in it, rests on the world; my intention being to allude to the peace, which, by the negotiations of his Most Serene father, is preserved to Italy!"

The Duchess of Brunswick, who "came to our house to see me paint, on the 3rd of January, 1665," was treated, however, it would seem, with a sly bit of satire, instead of the usual dose of flattery expected by most personages when they condescend to stand by artists' easels. The lady, it appears, had the reputation of being possessed by a somewhat inordinate spirit of self-love. So "I painted her a Cupid, a year old, looking at himself in the glass, and wounding himself with his own arrow." And Malvasia, the historian of Bolognese art, who was intimate with the family, recounts, that while painting this allegorical device, the young artist kept repeating, "Let those comprehend that can. I know my own meaning!"

It does not appear that the Duchess left any commission.

Then a visit from the Duca di Mirandola is mentioned; and another from the Principe di Messerano. And then, "all the Princes and Princesses who have passed through Bologna this spring, have come to look at my pictures and to see me work."

We find mention of commissions from the Empress Leonora, from Prince Leopold of Tuscany, who rewards

the artist with a cross set with fifty-six diamonds,—the most liberal recompense she had ever received;—from the Duchess of Bavaria, who sends an order for another picture the following year; from Cardinal Farnese; from the Legate; and from the "Padre Inquisitore," who orders a Cupid crowned with laurel, with a sceptre in his hand.

All the cash payments earned by this untiring industry, were handed over to her father to go towards the general maintenance of the family. But the presents which she received in jewellery and other such matters were considered her private property, kept in a cupboard sacred to them, and shown by her mother Margherita to her gossips and the friends of the family on high days and holidays, with infinite pride and reverence.

It seems reasonable to suppose, that in a family of six persons,—leaving the medical son, of whom we find no further mention, out of the question,—in which four of the members are bread-winners, and that by industry so energetic, a considerable ease of circumstances ought to have been found. And perhaps the extreme simplicity of life, indicated by a few of the circumstances which happen to have been recorded, is to be attributed rather to the prevailing habits of frugality of the time, than to poverty. Thus we find that the master's sister occupied the position of cook in the family. The one other servant received four pauls, about two francs, a month for wages. And the family dinner, of which all the members of the household partook in company, consisted, on one occasion,—recorded not for any special reason, but accidentally, and therefore affording a sample of the ordinary fare,—of toasted bread and a little fish. There is a trifling

circumstance also, which may be thought to indicate that it was not always convenient to disburse cash for this lenten meal. For in the list of Elisabetta's works, among the pictures executed for churches, princes, and prelates, occurs one of "Saint Margaret, leading a dragon with an azure ribband, painted for the fisherman who supplies our house."

Her music-master also, — for Elisabetta was extremely fond of music, and a creditable performer, — was, we find, paid by a yearly present of a picture.

Possibly the father Giovanni Andrea may have been touched with the very common Italian vice of money-loving, and have been more niggardly in his disbursements than he ought to have been. For we find that now and then Elisabetta would sell some unimportant work of hers privately, in order to supply some little unacknowledged expenses of her mother.

This poor Donna Margherita, who, while her husband and daughters were at their busy easels, had nothing to do but to "rule her house," seems to have been the principal cause of any little roughness which ruffled from time to time the tranquil and cheerful course of successful and appreciated labour in the industrious artist-home. Donna Margherita, it is to be feared, was afflicted with a sharp tongue; and there are very unmistakeable symptoms of poor Lucia, the maid, not having earned her annual four-and-twenty francs too easily.

Again and again she had been on the point of throwing up all the advantages of her position under the provocation of her mistress's continual fault-finding. The daily reproach, that she was not worth her keep, was difficult to bear. Then she was accused of dressing her hair when there was no due occsion for such

display; the immutable rule of Dame Margherita's house being that the maid was allowed to appear with her head dressed only when visitors of distinction were expected to see the Signorina Elisabetta at her easel. Then again, the unreasonable Lucia wanted to go out occasionally,—gadding about the town, forsooth; and in Bologna too, of all places in the world, swarming from morn to night with idle university scholars! Dame Margherita would have no such doings. Besides, she wished to know what was the reason Lucia was always so anxious to go down herself and shut the ground-floor shutters that looked into the street, at night. Idle enough in other matters, why was she so anxious to perform this duty?

But when these provocations became more than she could bear, and the poor girl had made up her mind to go, Elisabetta would soothe and comfort her, with "Come, come, Lucia, don't leave us! Take time to think of it. Sleep on it this night, and make up your mind in the morning!" And as Lucia, like every one else in the house, was very fond of the Signorina Elisabetta, she would be persuaded to think better of it, and try to put up with Dame Margherita's tongue.

But all these reproaches of seeking occasion to go to the window at nightfall, anxiety to go out into the town, and untimely indulgences of hair-decking, were only grounds of suspicion, that Lucia was guilty of the heinous offence (not even yet in these improved times wholly extirpated from the race of Abigails) — of possessing a lover;—which however permissible, under proper regulations, for young persons inhabiting drawing-rooms, is, as every respectable person knows, most abominable in those living in kitchens. Still

there was nothing stronger against Lucia than mere suspicion.

But then came one unlucky day a terrible discovery. There passed down the Via Urbana a tinker in the exercise of his calling. Whereupon this wicked girl, —who could have thought there had been such deepness in her! as Dame Margherita (we may be quite sure) said,—bringing her mistress an old kettle out of the cellar, asked whether it would not be well to call in the tinker and have it mended. The tinker accordingly was summoned, and sent under escort of this false serving-maid to do his duty in such cellar, or outhouse, as may have been adapted to the business in hand. But Dame Margherita "had her suspicions;" and despatched two of her younger children to watch secretly the interview between Lucia and the tinker. The result was a confirmation of the mistress's worst fears. The first words overheard between them proved that the tinker was an old love of Lucia's, who had known her when in her mother's house.

Here was a scope for Mistress Margherita's eloquence! When it was exhausted, the good man Giovanni Andrea was called on to "speak as he ought" on the occasion. And he accordingly, we are told, "said some severe words." Even Elisabetta laughed at poor Lucia, and asked "how she could be so silly as to look after such a sorry knave?"

Now, to poor Lucia this seems to have been the last drop in the cup; and she finally made up her mind to leave her place. Thereupon her master, who was just then confined to his bed by a fit of the gout, which interrupted his work at the easel from time to time, called her into his room and remonstrated with her. "Don't you see, ungrateful girl that you are," he said,

"in what a condition you are leaving us? Here am I unable to leave my bed. Margherita is unwell. Barbara has the fever. And we have no one to help us." Lucia was inflexible. "Will you not wait till we have found another servant?"

"No, Signor, I cannot!" was the provoked girl's answer.

"Go, then," rejoined her angry master, "wherever God may lead you!"

But Giovanni Sirani could not reconcile it to his conscience to let the girl go forth unprotected into the city wholly left to her own devices. And the steps he took to prevent this are curiously illustrative of the manners of the time. He sent for two men, who were related to the girl; and privately arranged with them, that they should tell her they had found her an excellent place with a worthy family, to which they would at once conduct her. The unsuspecting Lucia departed accordingly; and was led by them to "the Hospital of St. Gregory, called the Beggar's Home," where she was forthwith shut up a prisoner! So that it should seem a master had the power to cause a girl guilty of nothing but having no home, to be thus imprisoned for her own protection: and yet that it was necessary to use a ruse to get her there!

The Sirani family were a good deal surprised at Lucia's determination to leave them just at the time she did. For it wanted only a few days of the annual fair held on the 24th of August. And a considerable item in the value of her place consisted in the presents which it was the custom to give her on this occasion. In the first year of her service Dame Margherita had given her a muff, and Elisabetta a couple of pauls. The next year the mistress had given her a shift, and

the Signorina a paul. And now, in the third year, she lost her fairings by abruptly going away just before the time when they were due.

This was the uncomfortable state of matters in the Sirani family in August 1665. Elisabetta herself had been for some time past out of her usual health. But with her ordinary invincible industry, she stuck to her work. With her father disabled by the gout, her sister Barbara also down with fever, and unable to earn anything, it was more than ever necessary that Elisabetta should take the labouring oar. And fortunately a fresh order for a picture from the Empress Eleonora had recently been received. And the young artist, answering her mother's anxious inquiries about a pain, from which she had been suffering, by saying that "the best way not to feel it was not to think of it," bravely set her canvas before her, and bent her mind to the composition of the new picture.

CHAPTER II.

HER DEATH.

ELISABETTA, who had been all her life previously in the enjoyment of sound and even robust health, had been feeling more or less unwell ever since the Lent of that year 1665. She suffered from slight pain in the stomach; and though she could with difficulty be got to speak on the subject, her loss of colour and of flesh showed unmistakeably that she was out of health. She was nevertheless as assiduous as ever at her easel; and in the first days of August was just setting to work on the picture ordered, as has been said, for the Empress Eleonora. On the 12th or 13th of that month, the pain from which she suffered became worse. And as Signor Gallerati, the medical man who attended the family, called that day to see her sister Barbara, who was ill with fever, Elisabetta spoke to him about herself. The learned doctor told her that no medicine could be taken for the present, as the sun was in the sign of the Lion; that her pain was caused by a cold; and that she might take a little syrup of vinegar.

On the 24th she was able to go with her mother to see the fair.

But on the 27th, as she was working in an upper room at her picture, the pain became so violent, that she with difficulty went down stairs to the room where

Barbara was ill in bed, and sitting down on the edge of it, said, "Oh! sister, I have so dreadful a pain in my stomach, that I feel as if I were dying!"

Barbara seeing the sudden changes in her colour, and contortions of her features, feared that she really was about to die; and hurriedly called their mother, who was in the next room. The mother immediately got her into bed; and a succession of fainting fits, accompanied by profuse cold perspirations followed. A messenger sent in haste to Dr. Gallerati, not finding him at home, brought a Doctor Mattaselani, who was, it appears, one of the leading physicians of the city. This gentleman ordered her purgatives, and ointment for exterior use.

Her mother in the meantime had given her a dose of "Theriaca," that time-honoured Venetian medicine, which was then celebrated all over Europe. It is a very thick oily substance, compounded of some fifty different ingredients, the receipt for which is said, with much probability, to have been brought from the East by the Venetians at a very early period. It was a specific adapted to the then state of medical science, no doubt. But it is a curious fact worth noticing, that this "triaca" as the Lombards call it, is still manufactured at Venice from the old recipe, is still prepared by the principal—perhaps only—manufacturer annually on the same fixed day set apart for generations for this purpose; and quainter still, that on that day the persons employed in the process, dress themselves in fifteenth century costume, and thus accoutred make their fire, bring out their cauldrons, and concoct their medicament on one of the open "campi" of Venice, amid a concourse of people assembled to watch the annual ceremony. Theriaca now-a-days hardly

finds its way beyond Venice and the neighbouring parts of Lombardy. But within those limits hardly a peasant's cottage would be found without its bottle of the drug, in which their ancestors placed their faith for so many generations.

The Theriaca, however, as may be supposed, availed nothing to our poor Elisabetta; and the treatment of Dr. Mattaselani as little. The fainting-fits and cold-sweats continued the whole night. In the morning of the 28th came Dr. Gallerati, and ordered more purgatives, more ointment, and the application of the diaphragm of a sheep to the stomach! And when no advantage was found to result from this, he gave the patient the celebrated poison antidote "Bezoar," and the "Olio del Granduca;"—the Grand-duke's oil;—an antidote prepared, it should seem, in that Medicean laboratory of poisons in the Uffizi at Florence, which may well be believed to have been more successful in the preparation of them than in its providing antidotes against them.

When the Bezoar and the Grand-duke's oil failed to produce any abatement in the symptoms, the parish priest was sent for! And thus the young artist life, so rich in promise, and in dreams of beauty yet to be embodied, of long years of labour, and praise to be won, was cut short in its spring.

Elisabetta, intent only on her art, and habituated to a wholly objective frame of mind, had made so little account of the symptoms of malady that had manifested themselves during the last four or five months of her life, that her death struck her bereaved family as a wholly sudden and inexplicable calamity. Poison was the first thing that occurred to them. Indeed the idea had already presented itself to the physicians, as

is evident from the treatment. The practice of poisoning was so common in Italy in those ages, and the perpetration of it was rendered so little hazardous by the prevailing ignorance of pathological anatomy, that every death arising from causes not understood, was immediately attributed to this crime. And as a medical decision to that effect was a very convenient screen for medical ignorance, the faculty were by no means backward in encouraging and increasing the popular suspiciousness on the subject.

Poor Giovanni, therefore, was readily convinced that his daughter had died by poison; and ordered a post-mortem examination of her body, as the first step towards a judicial investigation. So the body was opened by the hospital barber, the recognised operator on such occasions, in the presence of Doctors Gallerati and Mattaselani, and other four of the first practitioners of Bologna.

Gallerati, the family medical man, who had already, it is to be observed, treated her case as one of poisoning, reported to the father, as the result of the examination, that a hole was found in the lower part of the stomach, large enough for a pea to pass, that around the hole there was a livid circle appearing as if burned with a hot iron, that the bowels were much inflamed, the diaphragm corroded, and that these appearances could only have been produced by the action of a corrosive poison. But on Sirani further questioning him on the nature of the poison, he answered, that it was certainly corrosive, "but whether administered to her, or generated naturally, was not a matter to speak with him—the father—on, as he had already given his opinion in the consultation of physicians."

The subject of "veleno ingenito," poison developing itself from natural causes within the organisation, was one much agitated in the medical world at that time; formed an admirable occasion for the exhibition of erudition; and was just in that state of partisan debateability least favourable to the attainment of truth, and most conducive to obstinate adhesion to foregone conclusions.

It having been thus decided, that poor Elisabetta had been poisoned; of course the next question that arose was, who was the poisoner?

The Sirani family had no enemies, and many friends; and the number of persons who could have had access to her or to the food she had taken, was very small. The members of her own family were plunged in grief at their bereavement. The three pupils had been sincerely attached to Elisabetta, and were scarcely less so. There was an old woman, who, on the day before she had been taken seriously ill, had been employed by Giovanni to carry a picture to a patron in the city. Fearing that the messenger might be long detained, he had desired that she might have some food given her in the house, before she started on her errand. Lucia had given her some soup from the pot preparing for the family. The old woman said, that it was insipid. Whereupon, Lucia, who was that same day, it will be remembered, about to leave her place, took, as the old woman swore, a paper of powder from her bosom, and shook some of its contents into the soup, saying "There! take a little cinnamon with it!" She further deposed that the powder was reddish, but did not taste like cinnamon; that she eat only a few spoonsful of the soup because she felt something gritty between her teeth; and,

finally, that she was afterwards taken so ill, as to be obliged to go to the hospital. The last fact was indubitably true; but it was equally so that she came out cured, without it ever having occurred to the hospital doctors to treat her for poison.

Under these circumstances it was decided, that Lucia must be the poisoner. But she had always been particularly fond of the deceased. Ah! but then she had a love affair with the tinker, which looked very bad. She had obstinately determined to leave her place just before fairing time. That was very suspicious. She had to all appearance poisoned the old woman also; though nobody seems to have dreamed of asking for what possible motive she should have committed this second crime. Then, to clinch all, the reverend Dr. Masi, the Archbishop's fiscal (a friend of the Sirani family), swore, that on his visiting Lucia in prison, in order to examine her as to the state of her soul, she said, "If you mean to hang me, do it at once. At all events, I have given my soul to the devil!"

So that it was clear, that Lucia was the poisoner. She was arrested, and the judicial investigations were commenced. Two of the medical men, who had been present at the post mortem examination, Gallerati and another, were examined; and, after giving a detailed account of the appearances they had observed, declared it certain that Elisabetta had died by poison, either administered to her or "naturally developed," but with strong probability in favour of the former hypothesis.

But at this point of the proceeding a curious and characteristic incident occurred. The ecclesiastical authorities interposed a claim, that the prisoner should

be given up to them, as having been arrested in a place subjected to ecclesiastical immunities; which was the case with respect to the poor-house, to which Lucia was taken, as has been seen, when she left the Sirani house. The claim was admitted; Lucia was transferred to the hands of the Archbishop's officers, and by them set at liberty.

According to the ordinary course of proceeding in such cases, had it not been for this interposition on the part of the Church, Lucia would have been put to the torture, to extract from her a confession of her guilt. And it would seem that she was saved from this barbarity only by that fortunate interference. But it appears, that all that had taken place in the matter formed no bar to a new arrest, if the accused could be caught on unprivileged ground. No further steps however were taken in the business, till the following April, 1666; when Lucia, who does not appear to have made any attempt at escape, either by flight or by remaining in sanctuary, was arrested afresh, as she was walking in the main street of the city.

The first question put to her was, whether she had any idea of the cause of her arrest. She answered at once, "The death of La Sirani."

"Are you aware that any painter or other person had any feeling of envy or hatred against the deceased?"

"I neither know, nor did I ever hear of any body hating the Signora Elisabetta, from professional jealousy or any other cause."

"What was your reason for so suddenly leaving the family a few days before the fair?"

"Because I was weary of hearing continual fault-finding."

"Were you then not treated well in the Sirani family?"

"By the gentlemen* of the family, I was always well treated; and especially by the Signora Elisabetta. And if it had not been for her kindness, I should certainly have left the house long before, so insupportable were the annoyances of the Signora Margherita. But I remained for love of the Signora Elisabetta, who was very fond of me."

She was then questioned about the tinker; although her conduct with respect to him does not appear to have the slightest bearing on the case. She admitted, that he had been an old sweetheart of hers, when she lived with her mother, and he had been a lodger in the same house.

Then came the circumstance of the old woman, and the soup, and the red powder. The woman, by this time, quite recovered from her illness, swore positively that Lucia had taken the powder from her bosom, and that it was red, and that she had said that it was cinnamon. Lucia, confronted with her, swore that she took the powder from a box on a shelf, that it was pepper, and she put it into the soup in presence of Giacoma, Sirani's sister, who, as we have seen, was the family cook.

Now, according to the regular practice of the criminal courts, this contradictory swearing required that the accused should be tortured. Moreover, Giacoma ought to have been called as a witness. But neither of these things was done. It seems however, that the judge had conferred privately with Doctor Mattaselani, and had been satisfied by

* This would seem to refer either to the medical brother or to the pupils in the house.

him that the old woman had never been poisoned at all.

Lucia was sent back to prison, and ordered to produce her defence in three days. At the end of that time an advocate presented himself on her behalf, and showed without difficulty, as may be judged from what has been related of the accusation, that there was no tittle of evidence against the prisoner; and he especially demanded that the other medical men, who had made the post-mortem examination, should be called to give their evidence. For two only, Gallerati, the family doctor, and another, had hitherto been examined.

This was done. And Doctor Mattaselani and another, describing the appearance of the body exactly as the others had done, gave it as their decided opinion, that the death had been caused by an inflammatory ulcer arising from natural causes; as any medical man of the present day would, from the symptoms detailed above, conclude to have been in all probability the truth.

It having thus become tolerably clear that there was no case whatever against Lucia Tolomelli, for that was the unlucky girl's name, she was not condemned as a poisoner, but banished from the Legation.

The Sirani family themselves, however, as well as the judicial authorities, seem to have on reflection come to the conclusion, that Lucia was certainly innocent, and her exile unjust. For there is extant, an instance, signed by Giovanni Sirani, and dated 3rd January, 1668, wherein he formally declares, that he has no complaint to make against her, and no opposition to offer to the remission of her sentence of exile.

The amount of public feeling excited in Bologna by Elisabetta Sirani's untimely death, was extraordinarily great. As usual in similar cases, the popular regret took the form of indignation, and demanded an expiatory victim. As usual, also, theories more or less melodramatic, were invented to account for and adorn the misfortune. It was hardly to be supposed that Lucia could have had any spite of her own against her kind young mistress. She must have acted then at the instigation of another; some powerful person no doubt; some great man, whom the young artist had offended probably, by the rejection of amatory advances, said some, or by a satirical use of her pencil, as others supposed. This explained all the irregularity observed in the process. This was why Lucia was not tortured, as by good right she ought to have been. This made it clear why she was set at liberty for a while, till by practising on the doctors, they could be induced to give such testimony as would hush the matter up, with a verdict of death from natural causes. This also, finally, accounted for Lucia's removal for awhile by exile, till the excitement and curiosity of the public should have passed.

And as such a theory comfortably explained much which the citizens were at a loss to comprehend, as it supplied abundant food for gossip, and under-breath speculations and guesses, and wise looks, as to the concealed author of all this wickedness, and especially as it made a good story to tell and to write, this became the accredited version, till now it is stated, as a simple fact in artistic manuals and guide-books, that Elisabetta Sirani was poisoned.

The real truth is, that there is not a tittle of

evidence in favour of such a supposition, to be opposed to all the insuperable difficulties in the way of convicting Lucia, the only person whom it was found possible to suspect. The only fragment of foundation to the entire fiction consists in Dr. Gallerati's ignorant and learned trash about administered poisons, and inborn poisons. Even he only ventured to incline in favour of the probability of the former in this case. And the direct testimony of Dr. Mattaselani and one of his colleagues, agreeing as it does with the view which any modern medical man would take of the case as reported, viz., that the deceased died of inflamed ulcer in the stomach, may be rightly held to be conculsive on the subject.

Some letters from persons at Bologna, including two from Giovanni Sirani, written immediately after Elisabetta's death, to correspondents at Florence, have recently been published in the "Rivista di Firenze." The editor thinks that "no doubt remains at the present day, that her (Elisabetta's) death was caused by poison given her by the maid, Lucia Tolomelli, the instrument either of the despised love, or of the offended pride of some powerful personage." To the present writer, however, the opinion expressed above, which is also that of Signor Toselli, to whom we are indebted for the discovery and publication of the records of the trial, appears equally "undoubted."

One of the letters, six in number, is from the physician Gallerati, in which he details the result of the post-mortem examination as we have it in his evidence.

Another is from Count Annibale Ranuzzi to the Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici, in which he says, "The poor girl was poisoned according to the unanimous

opinion of the medical men, who to the number of seven or eight were present at the examination of the body." This, as we have seen, was not true.

A third letter is from Giovanni Sirani to the same Cardinal, in which he says that his "daughter Elisabetta had been removed from the world by poison, through envy."

A fourth letter from the same to the Cardinal, says, that he thinks he shall be obliged "to quit his clime of Bologna, and go where justice is not suffocated; for this enormous crime has been concealed under pretext of ecclesiastical immunities."

We knew before that such were the opinions prevalent at Bologna at the time. But we know also that Giovanni Sirani changed his opinion on the subject. And it must be borne in mind, that criminal proceedings were kept strictly secret in the Papal States; and that the public therefore had not those means of enlightening its judgment on the subject, which Signor Toselli's pamphlet has supplied to us.

The sorrow for the young artist's untimely death was general in Bologna, and the manifestations of it may seem to us excessive. But in that day, when art, though on the decline from its culminating period, was all that retained any real life in Italy, the artist held a place in the esteem and interest of his fellow citizens, which, however honoured, he cannot hope to do in communities where his art is only one of a hundred manifestations of intellectual life and energy. In losing her young and rising artist, Bologna lost an important element of her claim to take rank among her rival municipalities in the scale of civilisation and renown.

Still this hardly seems to be sufficient to account

for the outburst of wailing and enthusiastic apotheosising which followed Elisabetta's death. Greater artists died, were mourned, and celebrated with far less universality of lamentation and eulogistic commemoration. And on looking over the threnodic expression of Bologna's regret for "La Sirani," it seems clear that the woman had captivated the affection of her contemporaries, as much as the artist had excited their admiration.

Judging from the picture in the Ercolani gallery at Bologna, which represents her in the act of painting a portrait of her father, and which has been engraved for Signor Toselli's pamphlet, she must have been very pretty. And it is recorded that her figure was tall and elegant. She was a good musician, and her conversation is said to have been witty and sprightly. Yet one of the innumerable sonnets on her death begins:

"Fui donna in terra, e non conobbi amore."

"A woman while on earth, I yet knew nought of love."

And indeed it may be supposed that she had resolutely determined to devote herself and her life and energies wholly and exclusively to her art. For in Italy few marriages are made by women after the twenty-sixth year.

Her funeral may be said to have been a public one, so extensive were the absurdities of funeral pomp, and so general the participation in the ceremony of all classes of the citizens. Malvasia, the historian of Bolognese art, who was intimate with her and her family, has written what he calls her life, in his "Felsina Pittrice," really in the tone of a man beside himself. He is furious that Lucia was not tortured to make her discoverer the instigator of her supposed

crime; he regrets that "being a Christian and a Priest," he cannot with propriety curse all persons guilty of her death, as violently as he should like to do; and altogether has written some score of pages in a style of monstrous bombast, which seems a caricature of the well-known absurdities of the Italian style of that epoch.

Finally, there is volume, entitled, "Il Pennello lagrimato," published at Bologna in the year of her death, which consists of a great variety of orations, odes, sonnets, anagrams, funeral conundrums, and epitaphs, in Latin and Italian, by all the literary and learned men of the city, proving the high place poor Elisabetta had held in the affections and esteem of her contemporaries, and the extremity of bad taste, puerility, and abasement, into which a century or so of "orderly" despotism had plunged the nation.

LA CORILLA.

(1740—1800.)

CHAPTER I.

THE APPRENTICESHIP TO THE LAUREL.

In the Via della Forca, at Florence, the eye of an observant traveller may remark a marble slab let into the front of an otherwise undistinguished house, and bearing the inscription "Here lived La Corilla in the eighteenth century." The laconic stone vouchsafes no further word of enlightenment; those who placed it where it stands, for the information of future generations, having evidently imagined that nothing more would be necessary, and that posterity, on seeing the brief announcement, would gaze on the dirty plaster-coloured tenement with enthusiasm, while it exclaimed, "Ha! 'twas within these walls, then, that the bright poet-spirit, the marvel of her age, the divine Corilla, lived while she was in the flesh!" &c., &c. But posterity unfortunately has already in the century next after the one so illustrated begun to exclaim instead, "Corilla lived here! And who the deuce was Corilla?" And then posterity, it is to be feared, would think nothing more about the matter.

And yet the question is worth answering. For "La Corilla," forgotten as she is, and in nowise worthy of

being remembered on any other ground, was the quintessential product and expression of the literary life of her time and country. And, what is more important, that literature, and those literary tastes and habits, which may be said to have culminated in La Corilla, were the normal product, evolved according to certain unchanging and ascertainable laws, of the general social system then prevailing in Italy. And this again was with perfect regularity of cause and effect brought about in due course of historical development; so that from Dante, who was exiled, to La Corilla, who was crowned at the Capitol, the march of Italy across the centuries may be traced almost as surely in the history of its literature, as in that of its material life and political changes.

Yes. The lady who lived in the Via della Forca in the eighteenth century was crowned at the Capitol in Rome in the year 1776. This is the principal fact of her story, tellable in very few words. But for the reasons stated above, it is worth while to spend a few minutes in examining what that crowning at the Capitol was and meant, and how La Corilla came to deserve that remarkable distinction.

We find that she had three predecessors on that throne in the Roman Campidoglio: Petrarch, Tasso, and "Perfetti." Petrarch and Tasso the world knows, though it knows little of their Roman crowning. And diligent Dryasdust researches will discover "Perfetti" to be the name of a man—and a cavalier—who in that same eighteenth century was similarly operated on, and whom not even Dryasdust could have dug out from the underlying strata, had he not been so treated.

And here we are struck by the remarkable fact of the long abeyance of the laurel crown. From Tasso

in the sixteenth, to Perfetti and Corilla in the eighteenth century, it should seem, none were found crownable in Italy. Are we to consider that these recent crowned heads take rank in their country's Pantheon next after the author of the "Gerusalemme"? Or must it be supposed that the significance of Campidoglio crowning became changed yet more rapidly than the national literature, fast as it moved in the same direction, could follow it; so that the knight Perfetti and the lady Corilla were the first who overtook the standard of the crown conferrers, and came up to the modern mark?

Let us see whether any explanation of these puzzling circumstances can be obtained from an examination of La Corilla's titles to her high honour.

In the vulgar unpoetical world of baptismal registers, milliners' bills, and such matter-of-fact trivialities, "La Corilla" was known as Maria Maddalena Morelli. It was only "in Arcadia" that she was "La Corilla Olympica;" for such was her full Arcadian style and title.

Maria Maddalena Morelli, then, in plain prose, was born of humble parents at Pistoja, a Tuscan city some twenty miles from Florence, in the year 1740, and was educated in a better manner than the means of her parents could have commanded, by the kindness of a noble lady of that city. When she was only ten years old, her lively gracious manners and pleasing appearance obtained for her another and more important patroness. This was the Princess Pallavicini, who took the engaging child with her to Rome, and there completed her education according to the best and most perfect literary methods known to an age and people, who deemed Metastasio "the Prince of Poets."

While still at Rome she began to be favourably known to "the shepherds and shepherdesses, who owned the gentle sway of the blond-haired god of the silver bow," in that city for the quickness of her parts, and inclination towards poetry. And there a third patroness took her by the hand—the Princess Columbrano—who carried the blossoming muse with her to Naples, there to rhyme "amore," "a tutte le ore," for the amusement and admiration of the polite drawing-rooms, whose serene and illustrious inmates were unable to perform such feats of intellect for themselves.

Her success in this occupation was great, and was attended by a rapidly increasing and extending reputation. Amid these early triumphs the youthful poetess was wooed and won by Fernando Fernandez, a Spanish gentleman, whose entire biography, so far as recoverable from the greedy maw of dull oblivion, is narrated in the above words. Having given the "Zitella" Maddalena Morelli the social status of "La Signora Fernandez," he retires behind the side-scene, and is no more heard of.

It may be as well to state at once, however, to prevent misconception, that, notwithstanding the social circumstances which called Don Fernando to live in the shade, while his wife pursued her calling in the sunshine, there is no reason to doubt that La Signora Fernandez was a very good wife to her husband, and devoted herself to her domestic duties whenever she could get out of "Arcadia" for a season.

As for Don Fernando, the one sole fact of his biography will probably authorise us to conclude that he was a shrewd gentleman, with a good eye for the main chance; for in truth the marriage with "La Corilla" was a very good speculation. And the great

Mr. Barnum, had he lived in those days, would assuredly have put himself into communication with her, and made arrangements for working the Arcadian farm to their mutual profit. However inferior to so great a master, Don Fernando was no doubt awake to the Arcadian yield. And we may picture him to ourselves as occupied in haunting the antechambers of princes and cardinals with "programmes" in his pocket, signing and issuing tickets, bargaining with fiddlers for their accompaniment to the Muse's improvisation, and doing any other such Arcadian bottle-holding as might assist in keeping his own and the Muse's pot boiling for the comfort of their ex-Arcadian existence.

It is evident that Corilla's business was a very profitable one. The highnesses, serenities, eminences, and other minor grandees were condemned to dreadfully dull lives in those days, and were delighted with any stimulant of a sufficiently mild nature and thoroughly safe quality. The world's rulers had long since learned that it was good to "patronise literature." It was in those days more than ever the fashion to do so. But literature had of late been exhibiting symptoms very disquieting to its courtly friends, who found it more than ever necessary to take precautions for having their literature of the right sort.

The "difficulty" between literature and princes is one of old date; and, truth to tell, the connection between them has rarely been creditable to either party. If Francis I. showed his paternal regard for learning by limiting the printing-presses in all France to twelve licensed machines, literature, even as represented by such men as the historian Robertson, has been flunky enough to extol him as "the father of letters!" How often has the clause—"but he pro-

tected literature and loved learned men" — been accepted in a historian's summing-up of the character of some royal scourge of humanity, as a set-off against a host of abominations wholly incompatible with any real appreciation of the value of human intellect! It is quite time that the historic claims of many princely "fathers of literature" to the lenient consideration of the world on this ground, should be more rightly appreciated. And the dealings of several of the Italian princes during the last three hundred years with those "dangerous classes" of their subjects, the men of the pen, form a very instructive manual of the royal art of patronising literature.

Cosmo I., Duke of Florence, by the grace of Charles V., was a most able practitioner in this line. He founded the Florentine Academy, and regulated its studies and duties in accordance with the great discovery, that the exercise of men's minds on words might be quite safe and harmless, if carefully disjoined from any application of their thoughts to things; nay, might even not only be harmless, but positively useful in promoting all those qualities which make men good subjects. And it is quite curious to observe with what unity of aim, means, and success, the policy so inaugurated by him has been carried out by those who came after him. Hence the innumerable "academies" which swarmed in every city of Italy, vieing with each other in the absurdity of their appellations and the frivolity of their pursuits. Hence the production of a literature which from generation to generation grew ever safer and safer, till it culminated in Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses; and gave birth to a Corilla, who could be warranted to produce, in whatever heat of poetical estro and fervid flow of extempore song,

only such strains as were fitted for noble ears to hear, and were calculated to "encourage the best sentiments in the masses."

The literature thus produced to meet the special requirements of enlightened princely protectors, and perfectionated by the dwindling intellect of successive generations to a pitch of imbecility scarcely credible, instructively illustrates its own birth, descent, antecedents, and functions, by the consistent and intense falsity which saturates and gives its character to the entire mass of it. The exterior and avowed fictions, which turned companies of sober middle-aged gentlemen, nobles, magistrates, lawyers, physicians, and divines, into Arcadian shepherds, calling each other by such absurd *aliases* as "Parmenio Dirceo," "Prasilio Dedaleo," "Dorillo Dafneio," and a thousand such, were but the fitting corporeal manifestation of a spirit as fictitious. The essence of "Arcadian" citizenship was to think false thoughts, to speak no word which should be a representation of any real thing, to cut off with jealous care all possible communication between the world of "Arcady" and the world of reality, and to take good heed that no stray tone of the voice of literature should by chance address itself to any one genuine feeling of the heart of man, evoke a sincere thought, or appeal to a real interest. It is easy to see how admirably such a literature was adapted to fulfil the objects of the princely founders and patrons of "Academies."

Our Olympic Corilla's business therefore throve, as every business does that produces wares in demand. Shortly after her marriage, the now celebrated *Improvisatrice* made a professional tour through Italy, and was listened to with delight in the patrician saloons

of Bologna, Modena, Parma, Venice, &c. Fresh triumphs, we are told, everywhere awaited her; and her readiness, nimbleness of wit and tongue, and facility, became the admiration of all Italy.

The land of the "dolce favella" still brings forth "improvisatori" and "improvisatrice;" and those who have had an opportunity of hearing performances of the sort will readily appreciate the quality and amount of talent needed for the production of them. A dull, unimpressionable or unimaginative mind would of course entirely fail at any such exercise. But it is extremely probable, that a profound and suggestive intellect richly laden with stores of thought, and habitually critical in the marshalling and effective presentment of those stores, would be found equally unsuccessful. A light nimble wit of exclusively objective tendency, unburdened by deep views of things, and unimpeded by habits of examination and reflection; a ready and copious memory, well furnished with common-places, a good command of the language and its inexhaustible rhyming capabilities — that melliflu-ous language, of which it may be said, that every child born to the use of it, "lisps in numbers, for the numbers come" naturally to its attempts to talk;— and finally, perhaps the most essential qualification of all for the exercise of the art, a practised dexterity in avoiding any such treatment of a given subject as might lead to difficulty, a competent degree of skill in keeping to generals, and in finding some thread of connection, by virtue of which matter that can be easily said and sung from the cut and dried assortment of common places in store, is forced by a gentle compulsion to serve the purpose of more or less pertinently illustrating the topic in hand;—these are the

qualifications which form the equipment of the "improvisatore." Practice will of course infinitely increase the performer's capabilities. Of course, too, a clever and bright professor of the art will string his rhymes with more play of fancy, and a greater approach to some novelty of poetical thought, than a stupid one. But it is difficult to believe that anything worth even the value of the hour spent in hearing him was ever produced by a practitioner of improvisation. And the habit of encouraging and admiring such performances is doubtless, to a certain degree, pernicious to a people who need every possible incitement to lower their estimate of the value of words as opposed to that of things, instead of additional temptations to accept mere verbiage in the place of thought.

But among the "distinguished circles" which patronised our Corilla, this was exactly the article wanted. Accordingly, when Pietro Leopoldo was to be married to Maria Luisa of Bourbon in 1765, Corilla was invited by the great Maria Theresa to go to Innspruck "to celebrate the nuptials." And we can well understand that she did so, eminently to the satisfaction of her imperial patrons. On returning well remunerated to Florence, she was appointed court poetess, and received a pension. And now her reputation had become clearly European in its extent, as far at least as that could be conferred by the courts of Europe. For Catherine the Second, thinking that she too would do the royal thing in civilised style, and patronise literature, sent an invitation to the poetess to come from Arcady to Russia, and be court poetess there,—not, it is to be hoped, to sing the "res gestæ" of the sovereign! But Corilla preferred to be a ducal poetess in "la bella Firenze," rather than an imperial one in

Russia. And Catherine, though refused, nevertheless marked her appreciation of the claims of literature by conferring a pension on its court representative. Another invitation came to the happy shepherdess from Joseph the Second, who, radical reformer as he was, yet was quite monarchical enough to admire and approve Arcadian literature. Joseph was also refused; and he too sent magnificent presents to the recalcitrant Muse.

CHAPTER II.

THE CORONATION.

THE celebrated "improvisatrice" had been some time before this solemnly admitted a member of their Academy by the Arcadians of Rome. She entered Arcady as the "pastorella, Corilla Olympica;" and was thenceforth better known by that name than her real one. The Arcadians were exceedingly proud of their shepherdess; and to make the most of her, and at the same time get an occasion of parading all their pastoral absurdities, and obtaining each shepherd his share of glorification, it was suggested to have a coronation on the old Capitoline-hill, and try to make believe for a while, that the laurel bestowed in that time-hallowed spot, had still a value, and represented something in the eyes of Europe.

There were, however, difficulties in the way, of a nature which are not apparent in the official records of the ceremony. These are all to be found in a very handsomely got up volume, printed by Bodoni the celebrated typographer, at the royal Parma press, in the year 1779. The publication comprises also the numerous poetical compositions produced in honour of the occasion, together with "A list of the gentlemen poets"—"Indice de' Signori Poeti," who took part in the proceeding. There are no less than sixty-six possessors of the "Os magna sonaturum!" de-

signed to unapprehensive posterity by such names and titles as "Antilio Pireatide, a member of the Inextricables of Parma, called Birdilio among the Academicians of Concord," and, among vulgar men, professor of rhetoric in the College at Parma;—"Aglauro of the Reggio Hypochondriacs" (this unfortunate person was a lady known outside Arcady as the Countess Paradisi);—"Fidauro Tessalide, a Dominican monk, called Lucio Lentulo among the Strong Academicians of Rome;"—"L' Intronato, member of the Transformed Ones of Milan;"—"Nivildo Amaranzio, a priest, called in the outer world, Giovacchino Pizzi, member of the Academy of Inscriptions at Paris, a Della Cruscan at Florence, and Custos-General of Arcadia!"—"Parmenio Dirceo of Parma, called Philander of Crete among the shepherds of Emonia;"—"Telejo Focidense, an Academician of Florence, Apathist, Vice-Custos of the Alphean Colony of Arcadians," and among un-Arcadian men professor of feudal law in the University of Pisa;—"Dr. Agnelli, secretary of the Intrepid Ones, and Pro-vice-Custos of the Ariostean Colony of Arcadians;"—and, finally, "Maria Forster, Poetess of the late Princess of Tuscany, Violante."

These and a crowd of other strangely nick-named gentlemen and ladies contribute to fill the superbly printed pages of a book, which, it may be safely asserted, no human eye has ever perused in its entirety since it was printed. The Custos-General of Arcadia himself would probably have been unequal to the task. But the more strictly official documents of the ceremony contained in the volume have, with toil and much suffering from nausea, been read by the present writer. And it is certain that no remotest hint

of the difficulties that lay in the way of this desirable recognition of merit, as mentioned above, is to be discovered. The "Conservatori" of Rome, we are told, having "specially observed the transports of affection demonstrated by La Corilla for this favoured city, the seat of Religion and Virtue, and hearing the praises into which she continually broke forth in her extemporaneous songs, of the pacific and well-regulated government, of the greatness of mind, the invincible justice, and rare piety of the sovereign recently seated on the throne of St. Peter, on occasion of whose happy exaltation she had frequently improvised, and finally seeing her so much honoured, praised, visited, and distinguished by many noble and conspicuous personages,"—the Conservatori of Rome, duly rating all these meritorious circumstances, having first presented her with a diploma of Roman nobility, thought fit to make application to the papal government for permission to crown her on the Capitol. A most gracious and benign answer was returned, forwarded to the Custos-General of all Arcadia; and the whole matter is made to assume the aspect of a spontaneous homage—if not exactly to merit—at least to those unpremeditated lays in favour of papal government, and virtue. Pius the Sixth is touched by the enthusiastic and ingenuous tribute of the inspired singer, and at once falls in with the wishes of his subjects, Arcadian and other, to award the laurel to so deserving a shepherdess.

Where is there any difficulty in the matter? Is it to be found in the shrinking modesty of the poetess? Has any envious brother shepherd;—(for Arcadia itself was not free from such passions);—raised an opposing voice to the general wishes?

Not this. But that "amari aliquid," the bill. Benignant Pius and his pacific government,—break forth into whatever unpremeditated praises of him you may,—will not lend his Capitoline Hill for you to be crowned on under forty thousand dollars! A consideration well calculated to make an aspiring poet pause, and admirably adapted to keep the company of laurel-crowned heads select! Where was Arcadia to get forty thousand dollars? Forty thousand sonnets the shepherds and shepherdesses of its tuneful vales would have gladly advanced at a short notice. But dollars were another matter. And without the cash down, no crowning! The encouragement of literature, Rome honouring herself before the world, asserting ancient supremacy in letters and civilisation, was all very fine; and the papal government was delighted to encourage merit . . . . at forty thousand dollars a head; would doubtless even have had the liberality to crown a dozen for the four hundred thousand dollars; but upon one single crowning no reduction could be made.

But the Arcadian shepherds, and the gentle "pastorella" more specially interested had a friend;—one whose flocks were fed not in Arcady, but on wide-spreading Tuscan pastures;—a man of money, who was willing to invest the serious sum required in pageantry for the eternal glorification of Arcadia, — and himself. This public-spirited individual was the Senator Lorenzo Ginori, who paid the cash, and was, therefore —to leave Arcady and speak plain truth for awhile;— the real author and getter up of the entire affair. And the whole carefully maintained appearance of spontaneity, the high-flown talk of the papal admiration for the matchless poetess, and honourable encourage-

ment of letters, the floods of mutual complimentation between all parties engaged in the grave farce, were all as utterly false and fictitious as the "literature" to be encouraged, the sentiments expressed, the designations of the mummers who uttered them, and everything else in this idyllic Arcady. And everybody knew perfectly well, that everybody else knew that the whole thing was a sham and a humbug. Yet they mouthed out their speeches and their odes and sonnets, and said all that could have been said if the thing had been genuine, with grave decorum, without laughing in each other's faces; and found the doing so an exceedingly agreeable pastime.

Not a hint of the real nature of the business is to be found in the records of it, above mentioned. What does Arcady know of dollars? Of "Phœbus the blond ruler of Parnassus," of Arcadian shepherds in conclave, and of the lofty mëed of glorious song, we read much. But of the Senator Lorenzo Ginori and his forty thousand good dollars, not a word; which seems rather hard on so munificent a patron of Arcadia.

The narrative of the proceedings on the occasion, ridiculous enough even if they had been genuine, becomes infinitely more absurd when read by the light of the real facts of the case. It was pretended that the Academy of Arcadians were to adjudge and decree the crown. And they were to make believe to subject the aspirant to a tremendously severe ordeal; on which it was supposed their judgment was to be based. In solemn Arcadian conclave accordingly it was arranged that the poetess should be called on to extemporise on twelve "subjects of science and art." And twelve experienced shepherds are gravely appointed by the conclave to propose themes on the following subjects:—

1. Sacred history.
2. Revealed religion.
3. Moral philosophy.
4. Physical science.
5. Metaphysics.
6. Heroic poetry.
7. Legislation.
8. Eloquence.
9. Mythology.
10. Harmony.
11. The fine arts.
12. Pastoral poetry.

When poor Corilla should have produced a sufficient extempore poem on each of these subjects, she was to be declared worthy of the laurel-crown! Sacred history was assigned to Bishop Giovardi, who was "Dean of Arcadia." And the Archbishop of Apamea undertook revealed religion. Physical science was entrusted to the Pope's physician; the other subjects confided to equally able shepherds.

Three days were appointed for the solemn trial; four poems per day being deemed as much as the poet or the audience could endure. And on each of these, four of the appointed twelve examiners were to hand in a theme in a paper carefully sealed, to show that it could not have been communicated previously to the candidate. And of course everybody pretended to consider this as proof perfectly conclusive on that point.

The first examination was to take place at the house of Prince Gonzago di Castiglione; and all "the cream" of the Roman world was there.

"The improvisatrice," says the record, "entered the saloon with some appearance of apprehension, seeing herself exposed to so arduous an ordeal, and to the judgment of the public. The signal was given to the violins to begin their harmonious sounds for the purpose of stirring up the poetess — *per iscuotere la poetessa* — and while everybody was expecting some well-considered exordium, she looked around as if lost

and stupefied; and seeing at that moment one of her Arcadian friends enter, she burst into song imploring of him prompt and well-timed aid. Then as if repenting of the weakness, and disdaining all human assistance, she invoked the mighty name of God; which produced a tender commotion in the audience. Then blazing up into a wonderful estro of song, the poetess, continually changing her metre and rhythm, ran over all the varied scientific topics proposed to her with an inexhaustible vein of poesy."

The tournament began with pastoral poetry. And the examiner appointed for this subject handed in a sealed paper, which when opened in the presence of the expectant company, was found to contain this novel and difficult theme: "The advantages of a city life compared with those of the country."

This topic having been most triumphantly disposed of, the examiner in physical science stepped forward and requested—by intervention of a similarly sealed paper—that the "pastorella" would favour the company with a poem "on the properties of light, explaining at the same time how the images of objects are painted in the eye."

The shepherdess made no more difficulty about this than she had about the more manageable theme which had preceded it.

Then came the eloquence examiner, who "invited her to explain the nature and degree of the fatal blow which eloquence received at the violent death of Marcus Tullius Cicero." This, too, was successfully despatched. And the harmony delegate next proposed a poem on the properties of harmony, subjoining—with a malicious significance, one might think, if it were possible for Arcadian souls to be guilty of espièglerie—

"an explanation why harmonious sounds, which delight us for a while, bore us when too long continued."

This was explained to the perfect satisfaction of the company. And then, the programme of that evening's business having been thus completed, "after a short pause for a magnificent collation, Corilla, without manifesting the slightest sign of exhaustion," and utterly insensible to the great truth she had been illustrating in her fourth poem, "demanded more themes!"

Whereupon an Abate among the company proposed, "Without religion there is no true virtue." And this thesis was handled in such style that "the audience were carried away with inexplicable (!) admiration and delight at hearing with what grace, learning, eloquence and fire the above theme was treated, in the poetical exposition of which the great improvisatrice demonstrated how truly prodigious enthusiasm is the animating spirit of poets."

On the second evening "all the magistracy of Arcadia" was present, besides "many other illustrious Arcadians, most ornate prelates, foreigners, distinguished by birth or learning" (the Duke of Gloucester was one of the former sort), "renowned monks, and twelve virtuous Roman ladies." On this occasion the four themes seem to have been given to the fair candidate all together.

That on revealed religion was, "Of what nature and how revealed was the first revealed religion?"

On sacred history: "The miraculous passage of the Red Sea."

On mythology: "Why does mythology represent Love to be blind, while at the same time it gives him a bow and arrows to shoot a certain mark?"

On legislation: "An European endeavouring to instruct a savage in the advantages of legislation."

On these subjects "the learned poetess fully satisfied with her sublime song the utmost expectation of the public. She sang in various choice Tuscan metres upon each of the enumerated topics, mixing them up occasionally one with another;" which, considering the nature of them, must have produced at all events some originality of treatment, it may be supposed.

On this occasion, also, the inexhaustible shepherdess, having made an end of this supply, demanded more. Whereupon one of the twelve virtuous ladies suggested, "The death of Pyramus and Thisbe;" and another, "the elegant problem, Whether constancy was most found in men or in women?"

"The new and spontaneous graces which Corilla manifested in singing on these themes were truly prodigious; and by her treatment of the first, several of the audience"—some of the renowned monks, perhaps —"were visibly moved to tears."

On the third and last evening the audience was so great, that not only the saloon prepared for the purpose, but the adjoining rooms were "filled with literature and the nobility." And the following were the subjects given.

On the fine arts: "Which among them is the most useful and delightful?" "And a charming thing it was to hear how the able improvisatrice extolled them all, but awarded the highest place to painting."

In epic poetry: "A specimen of the sublime style proper to epic poetry in the delineation of the character of some luminous hero?" The execution of this task was received with an outburst of applause when it appeared that the most "luminous hero" the judicious

poetess could think of was His Holiness Pope Pius the Sixth!

In metaphysics she was required to set forth the physical and moral proofs of the immortality of the soul.

The remaining twelfth examination, in moral philosophy, seems by some error or accident to have been omitted. But the indefatigable *pastorella*, "in nowise tired or exhausted," demanded, as on the other occasions, fresh subjects. So the Countess Isabella Soderini proposed to her, "The lament of a *pastorella* abandoned by her *pastor*." And when this had been duly sung, it was proposed to her by a bishop to conclude her performances with "An invocation to the gods, entreating them to be propitious on the day of her coronation, and to come down all of them on the Tarpeian rock to render the solemnity more enviable and immortal." We are assured that "no language can express the grace with which the poetess gave a most unexpected turn to this argument," by declaring that she needed no other gods and goddesses at her coronation than those now around her. And the wonderful effect produced by this "is testified by those who had the good fortune to be present at this last most marvellous extempore poem."

When it was done, the three hundred persons forming the audience "partook of abundant refreshments. *So that* nothing was wanting to render these literary sessions, noble, brilliant, magnificent, and delicious."

A most satisfactory testimonial was of course drawn up in due form, and signed by the examiners. It is dated, "From the shepherd's hut (la capanna) of the magnanimous and erudite Arcadian shepherd, Emireno Alantino;" and was formally presented to the Aca-

demy and government as the motive and authorisation for the coronation ceremony. This was fixed for the 31st of August. And we have next a minutely detailed description of all the upholstery magnificences, and the preparations for seats of various dignity; one eminently glorious reserved for the Duke of Gloucester, "who deigned to come in from Marino" to be present at the ceremony; and the musicians, and the "Magistracy of Arcadia," and that of Rome, &c. &c.

The nature of the ceremony itself may be easily imagined. The laurel crown was placed on her head by the Conservatori of the city, as she kneeled before them, with these words. "*Eximium hoc laudis poeticæ decus, quod tuo capiti impono sub felicissimis auspiciis sanctissimi Domini nostri Papæ Pii Sexti, Mulier egregia et nobilis nostra Civis, sit publici non minus erga te studii argumentum, quam obsequentissimi animi significatio erga amplissimam illam, et plane regiam benevolentiam, qua decoraris.*" To which she, still kneeling, responded, "*Poetica laurus immeritæ imposita fronti, excelsam sanctissimi Patris ac Principis Papæ Pii Sexti munificentiam, effusamque Senatus Populique Romani erga me voluntatem testatur, quarum utraque aut honore dignos invenit, aut facit.*"

Then of course there was cannon firing and trumpet sounding ad libitum; and recitations not equally ad libitum. For all Arcadia, as the record says, would willingly have availed themselves of the opportunity of indulging in the delight of reciting their compositions to an audience who could not escape from them. It was therefore absolutely necessary to stem in some degree the threatening flood of song; and it was determined that, besides the performances of the *pastorella* herself, there should be permitted

only one prose recitation, six sonnets, and one ode. The latter was taken as the lion's share by the "Custos of all Arcadia;" and the others distributed by lot among the Arcadians.

The prose man abused his opportunity shamefully, speaking sixteen octavo pages, in which he resumed all the topics treated by Corilla in her twelve examinations, and set forth how entirely she had satisfied her Arcadian judges, "all of them," as he said, "swans of an immortal wing"—"Cigni tutti d' eterne penne!" The sonnetteers were happily restrained by the immutable rules of their craft. But the great Custos indulged in some couple of hundred lines of "terza rima."

When all this had been got through, the *pastorella* herself was called on to "sing the praises of mighty Rome, and the honour of the laurel crown." And when she had done this, it was proposed to her to set forth "the falsity and injustice of the opinion of those, who maintain that the Christian religion is, by reason of its being founded in humility, not fitted to encourage talent or foster art." Finally, she was required to point out "the superiority of modern philosophy to the ancient."

"With this last extemporaneous poem, the poetess determined to put the seal to her glory, by running over with wonderful rapidity all the philosophical systems of ancient and modern times (!), and finally awarding the pre-eminence to the present age. In the whole course of this last song, the sensibility and gratitude of the poetess for the honour she had received carried her away; and in it the praises of Rome, for the protection it accords to talent and the fine arts, held the foremost place."

Then came universal congratulations from "the princes and princesses, cavaliers, and noble foreigners, especially the magnanimous Duke of Gloucester."

And so terminated the last adjudication of the laurel crown on the hill of the Capitol; a symbol which, once invested with true and high significance, had dwindled in perfect sympathy with all around it, till, like so many another superannuated embodiment of human thought, it had become a mere trading imposture, symbolising nothing but the utter hollowness and intense falsity of the social system, of which it was an unhealthy excrescence.

But it must not be imagined, that even in Rome in 1776, the decorous farce with which princes, and eminences, and Arcadian bishops, and "renowned monks," amused themselves, was universally accepted at more than its real worth in less polite circles outside the official and Arcadian world. Old Pasquin asserted his immemorial privileges on the occasion. An immense number of satires and libels were current in Rome, in which our poor Corilla was treated in a way that she at least seems in no degree to have deserved, for all that we hear of her private life, represents her to have been a good and estimable woman. Among other lampoons, the following is to be found recorded by Signor Vannucci in an article on Corilla in the "Raccolta Biographica" of Tipaldo. It marks the popular estimate of the value of Senator Ginori's forty-thousand scudi bargain:—

"Ordina e vuole Monsignor Missei
Che se passa Corilla coll' alloro,
Non le si tirin bucce o pomidoro,
Sotto la pena di baiocchi sei."

Monsignor Missei was governor of Rome. And

the ordinance attributed to him by Pasquin, may be read somewhat thus:—

> "By Monsignor Missei's decree, whoever
> Shall pelt Corilla in her laurel crown
> With love-apples or parings whatsoever,
> Must pay the penalty of threepence down."

The innocent *pastorella*, however, soon withdrew herself from the Arcadian honours and popular gibes of the Eternal City; and carried her crown and her reputation home to her native Tuscany. The former she devoutly dedicated to the Virgin, over one of whose altars, in the city of Pistoja, it may yet be seen. The latter, as has been said, had not been barren; but had procured for her the means of making a comfortable home for herself and her husband in the Via della Forca in fair Florence. She had one child, who died in its infancy. As for her husband, it may be remarked, that on the great day of the coronation, among all the detail of seats set apart for this and the other functionary and notability, we do not meet with any mention of the smallest stool appropriated to the Arcadian king-consort. He rises to the surface no more, except to have his death chronicled in 1790. His wife survived him only two years. But she had lived long enough to see Arcadia desolate, and the literary fashions and traditions of her palmy day, scattered before the morning wind of another epoch.

APPENDIX.

TO

THE LIFE OF BIANCA CAPPELLO.

ARTICLE I.

THE Abate Baldassare Zamboni collected, chiefly from the muniment-room of the Cappello family at Venice, upwards of 200 letters of Bianca, for the illustration of a life of her, which remains unfinished in MS. Of these Signor Federico Odorici has selected twenty-three, which he has printed in a pamphlet entitled, "New Researches Concerning Bianca Cappello," Milan, 1858. The chivalrous object of Signor Odorici's labour is to "rehabilitate" poor Bianca, according to the fashion so much in vogue in these latter days. I had no opportunity of seeing his pamphlet till my life of Bianca was finished. But I cannot say that it has led me to alter my estimate or conception of her character. I am indebted to him, however, for the power of giving my reader the following letters selected from his selection as the most interesting among them.

I.—*To the very magnificent Signor, Signor Andrea Cappello, my most respected Cousin, and as it were my Brother, at Venice.*

1572, February 21 (Venetian style).

I received and read your most welcome letter with the greatest pleasure. I am well pleased with your prudent discourse, and if I can judge therefrom how much you desire my return, think how greatly I must wish to bring it to pass; and indeed I was resolved upon it after the event* which has taken place, but

* She alludes in all probability to the murder of her husband; if so, the date of this letter would enable us to fix, with some approach to accu-

fortune, not content with persecuting me with unnumbered grievances, made my father-in-law resolve on assuming the guardianship of my daughter, and depriving me of it; and this he has been able to do, for so the laws and statutes of this city direct; that if the father of one defunct be yet living, to him rather than to any other be conceded the care of his grandchildren. Now think what must be my state of mind, and how greatly displeased must be the most noble Signor my father and the most magnificent Signor my brother, to whom for their better information I have sent copies of the contracts of such guardianship and of the laws, that they might see how matters stand with me to my great sorrow, and that they might not again fall out with me, who have no fault in the matter: and if it were not for the hope that I have in the most worthy and illustrious Lady Isabella, daughter of our Duke, and my most kind patroness, I should fear to get into some great trouble; yet I will not despair, and will trust in our Lord God and in your illustrious excellency for the finding of some remedy, because the world for the most part is all out of order; and I thought I would inform you of these particulars, because I know you have a hearty liking for me; and I entreat you to keep me informed here of whatever may be needful, and to defend me, if required, and to keep this our correspondence secret as usual; and may it please you to commend me to the Signor Doctor Gardelino, to whom for the present I do not write, and who I know was informed of everything by my very illustrious family, although when he was here he saw all that happened, and was informed respecting all that was thought likely to follow in the matter, nor will I at present say more, &c.

From Florence, the 21st day of February, 1573.

Your Magnificence's cousin and as it were sister,

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

II.—*To the same.*

1573, January 9 (Ven. style).

. . . . I must tell you, my Lord, that I was utterly astounded at the answer given you by my most illustrious (*father*), for certainly such words as those spoken by him do not agree with

racy, the time of that event, which the Florentine contemporary writers have not mentioned, and which the subsequent historians have not been able to fix.

the letters which he writes me. True it is that one cannot know the truth that is in men; yet I put my trust in God, who will do with me as shall be best. As to what my most illustrious father told you of me, that I wrote to him telling him that I was mistress of thirty thousand crowns in real and chattel property, it is true; but of this you must understand that I have to leave some portion to my daughter as duty requires, and that she may be honourably married as befits my daughter; and to quit this subject that I may not trouble your Lordship further, I will conclude, &c. &c.

From Florence, the 9th day of January, 1573.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

III.—*To the same.*

1573, January 16.

. . . . Your Lordship writes me that it has been said to the most illustrious Bon* that I possess twenty thousand crowns in money; but in this I think there has been some mistake, for I never wrote that I had such a sum in money; it is very true that I wrote to my most magnificent brother, that in real and chattel property and jewels I have more than thirty thousand crowns; and if I should go away in favour with my most illustrious lady dognisabella (*Donna Isabella Medici*) I should hope to take with me the greater part of the said property and possessions; and you must consider that I ought to leave a part of this to my daughter, therefore I think they have exaggerated in their offers to the most illustrious Bon, for it had been better to offer less and afterwards increase, than to offer more and perchance not come up to the sum, &c. . . .

. . . . I have received a letter, my Lord and Brother, from the very magnificent Francesco Moro, who writes me . . . all the conversation which you have had with my most illustrious father, but it differs greatly from what your Lordship wrote me; because the aforesaid Signor Francesco says that my illustrious father told your Lordship that he would prefer me to marry here; so that these words seem to me quite different from what you wrote me, &c., &c. And I should wish, my dearest Lord and Brother, that this business be kept as secret as possible, for if it were known to

* This appears to allude to some scheme of marriage, which Bianca would seem to have in some degree encouraged.

the most worthy and illustrious Lady Isabella it would be very hurtful to me, and would overthrow all our plans, &c.

Florence, the 16th day of January, 1573.

Your Lordship's, &c.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

I pray your Lordship to remember my birth (*certificate*) of which I wrote to you, and send it me, whereby you will do me a great favour.

IV.—*To the same.*

1573, March 20.

I understand by your letter how that your Lordship has spoken with my most illustrious father respecting the answer of that gentleman from the most noble Bon, and I comprehend what that gentleman says; nevertheless, I answer you that I trust in God's goodness to help me by His infinite mercy, and that I put little faith in strangers, and shall keep to the wishes of my most illustrious father, of my Lord and Brother, and of your Magnificence; to whom I entrust all that I possess, awaiting from you whatsoever decision may seem to you most fitting for the satisfaction of both parties, &c., &c.

Your Magnificence's, &c.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

P. S. Most Magnificent Lord and Brother, I beg of you to do me the favour to send me my Nativity, that is, the day and hour of my birth, and let no one beside yourselves know of this thing, &c. And you will also do me a favour if you will tell me who are they who seem to be my friends and afterwards act in contrary fashion as you write me, that I may know against whom I should be on my guard.

V.—*To the same.*

1573, March 28.

. . . . therefore I entreat you with my whole heart, my Lord and Brother, to persist in this good will towards me, and to help me, for without you I think not that things will ever come to an end, and would to God, according to what you tell me, that my most illustrious father had discussed this matter with you; for then it would have had a different ending; and since by your so loving letters to me, you have given me courage to open my heart to you respecting

the discourse that your Magnificence held with Gardellino, you did very wisely in telling him that my most illustrious father ought to seek out some fit person for me to marry; and that certainly in that way everything would be brought to an end, &c. And if this does not befal me, that is, if they do not think about finding me a husband, so that the said husband may come here for me with the most Magnificent Lord my brother, or with your Lordship, &c. . . . I do not think that in any other manner I can escape from hence, &c. It would be a serious matter, my lord, and very ill-judged in me, to leave a place where I am as much respected and loved as if I were a queen, &c. . . . .

Florence, the 28th day of March, 1573.

Your Magnificence's, &c.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

P. S. And all that I have said to you about my marrying I say for the safety of my life, for you must know that here there is no lack of most honourable matches and gentlemen of note who would be glad to have me and who are urging me to it all day long. Florentines as well as foreigners; and if I would have consented my most illustrious lady aforesaid would have given me awhile ago to one of her household, a Roman gentleman with an income of four thousand crowns, a gentleman of consequence, and distantly related to the aforesaid lady, and he never stops from following my lady all day long that he may get me, and this I only say to your Lordship that you may be well-advised of every thing, and that I do not desire to go to Venice because I lack chances of marriage here, but I only desire it in order to see my home, and for the honour of our house, and that only, for here I am courted and wished for, and there I should have to court and wish for others.

VI.—*To the same.*

1573, April 22.

. . . . I was much grieved at heart by the discourse between my most noble father and your magnificent Lordship, from which I conclude that he is not at all well-disposed towards me, and that his only wish to have me back at Venice is that he might bury me in a convent, which I will by no means do, for I know for a surety that so I should be lost, soul and body, and I do not choose, as I have often told your lordship, to change from a

mistress to a slave; but accepting that match of which I spoke to your lordship, I will leave everything to return to my country and my kin.

Florence, the 22 April, 1573.

Your Lordship's, &c.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

VII.—*To the same.*

May 1.

. . . . . If they (*her father and brother*) do not make up their minds to settle me otherwise than they have yet done, I shall stay where I am, and shall hold to your magnificent Lordship's counsel, which I see comes from the heart; I only wish, my Lord and Brother, that you should see that I have not failed and fail not to do all that is possible to come home and stay with my family; but if they will not have it I can do no more. I beseech you . . . . to undertake my defence, &c. . . . . that they may not think it is my fault that I do not come, &c.

Florence, May 1st, 1573.

Your Lordship's

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

VIII.—*To the same.*

August 1.

. . . . Of your goodness you have informed me (*referring to some noble Venetians who on their return from Florence had spoken ill of her*) of the things which may be to my prejudice, &c. . . . . and if they be mere scatterbrained folks you should put small faith in them, for they can speak as they will about me, but that this talk or gossip of theirs has any truth in it neither your Lordship nor others should believe, &c. . . . . And I must tell your Lordship that I have a matter of great importance *

* Signor Odorici thinks, in all probability correctly, that this matter, of too great importance to be written, was her hope of being married to the Duke after the death of the Duchess. He observes, that even the seal attached by Bianca to this letter seems to have reference to such an idea. It bore a Venus arming Cupid with arrows, with the motto significative enough certainly as a device of Bianca, "*Aude et fiet.*" But if such a scheme of succeeding to the place of the Grand Duchess appeared to be of such importance as to deserve the coming of her cousin to Florence to discuss it, while the lady to be supplanted was still alive and well, do not

to speak to you about, but I cannot put it into black and white because there are some things which ought not to be put on paper; but if you, my Lord and Brother, would of your courtesy honour me by coming to see me, which I know is allowable to you as a man. . . . . I pray you to grant me this favour, which if I have I shall die content, &c.

IX.—*To the same.*

August 15.

Another letter in the same strain in which she laments that he cannot come to Florence, because she has something to tell him, "*di troppa grande materia da mettere in carta.*'

X.—*To the same.*

1573, Oct. 3.

I have received yours of the 26th of last month, &c. . . . . with infinite joy and contentment, inasmuch as I understand from it the kind feelings of my most illustrious father towards me . . . . As to the finding a husband for me here, I thank your magnificent lordship for undertaking so much trouble for me, &c. . . . . for perhaps I may be able to put an end to my so great and grievous troubles, so that, my Lord and Brother, I beseech you to act in this matter so that I may obtain my desire; and your magnificence already knows by other letters of mine precisely what is my desire on the subject, that no one may come in the way of our just designs, &c. . . . . Give me in return good news of him (her brother Vittore), as likewise of my most noble father, that so I may put good faith in them, and think myself in favour with them, hoping that afterwards they may help me to return to my country and kindred.

Florence, the 3rd day of October, 1578.

Your Lordship's, &c.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

XI.—*To the same.*

October 17.

. . . . I know not, dearest Lord and Brother, in what terms to thank you for the great trouble that your Lordship has taken for me, and for the great love that I see you bear me. True it is

such plannings and discussions add some degree of probability to the Florentine notion, that Giovanna's welcome death was unduly hastened?

that to one who loves as you love me, no trouble seems heavy; and I assure you, that if any one should be loved for loving, you have good reason to love me for that I adore you: (*and farther on she says*) as to what you tell me that I ought to obtain from the aforesaid lady, (*Isabella Medici*) that she should write a letter to my most noble father, I tell you, my Lord and Brother, that this is not prudent, for I must make it appear to the said lady as if your noble Lordship wished to remove me from hence, and not as if I desired it myself &c.; but still if the time should come as I wrote to my brother, she (the Medici), like a wise lady, will be silent, not choosing to seem to rob me of my good fortune, although she be grieved to the heart at the thought of letting me go, &c.

Florence, the 17th October, 1573.

Your Lordship's, &c.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

XII—*To the same.*

October 31.

. . . . I am grieved to the heart to hear of the illness of the magnificent lady Loredana, your wife and my mistress, for I do certainly love her as I love my life, belonging as she does to you my Lord and Brother, whom I adore as I have good cause to do: (*and further on*) I see by what you, my Lord and Brother, have written to me, that you cannot induce my most magnificent brother to take any firm resolve, but God grant that every one may agree in the will of your magnificent Lordship, for I know it will be to the honour of all our house and my contentment: I, dearest Brother, am heartily grieved that you cannot come to see me, and I swear to you, by the life of my daughter, that this would be the greatest joy I could have in the world more than if my most noble father and magnificent brother were to come, &c. &c., and I could then tell you many things that by letter cannot be said, because I too fear lest if by ill fortune some one of these our letters were to miscarry, and fall into the hands of the most illustrious lady donisabella (*sic*), I should be ruined if she saw that it is I who seek to get away from hence, &c.

Florence, the last of October, 1573.

Your magnificent Lordship's cousin, sister, and servant,

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

XIII.—*To the same*

1573, Nov. 24.

. . . . and this I will do (*i. e., Keep an eye upon the letters that arrive*) with great care, in order that nothing may prevent my returning to my country and my home, according to the intention I have always had, and which I intend to fulfil; and God grant, that by his will, this may soon come to pass, and I did not write to you sooner, because, as I had the most illustrious lady donisabella (*sic*), and Don Pietro, her brother, with his wife, dining with me in my garden, they put out all my plans. (She then repeats her wish that he should come so that they may speak freely about that which "*cannot be put on paper.*") *

Florence, 24 Nov., 1573.

Your Lordship's, &c.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

XIV.—*To the same.*

1573, Dec. 5.

. . . . I have had a letter from my most magnificent brother, who tells me, that if I do not make up my mind to go to Venice without being married, these affairs of mine will become lengthy and impracticable; and I tell you, my most honoured Lord and Brother, that the lady donisabella (*sic*), will not hear of my going from hence, except on the conditions which she wrote to my brother, i. e. if I am married; and I swear to you, my lord, that I have been with her for more than two days to see if I could move her; but she told me that if I went from here without being married, she would by no means help me; therefore, you see, my Lord, that without her help I could do no good, because I must leave behind my goods and my flesh, by which I mean my daughter; and if I leave one thing still I would not leave the other. My Lord, if you do not bestir yourself to find or to make some friend of yours find a match for me, I think that my business will never be concluded. (*At the end she adds, that she cannot go on, because she is sent for by Isabella Medici to*

* It must be observed, that from this letter it would appear either that the "matter which cannot be put on paper" was, after all, not what has been conjectured, or that her wishes and intentions of returning to Venice were insincere.

accompany her and Cardinal Fernando to a grand hunting-party at Pisa.)

Florence, the 5th day of December, 1573.

BIANCHA CAPPELLO.

ARTICLE II.

I am indebted also to Signor Odorici for the following important extract from an anonymous chronicle of the life of Pope Sixtus V., the MS. of which exists in the Quirinal library at Rome, and which is, in his opinion, the work of a contemporary writer.

It will be seen that the statements made by the annalist are very difficult to reconcile with the theory of Ferdinando's guilt in the matter of his brother's death.

The reader must balance for himself the conflicting probabilities in this very doubtful and mysterious matter.

. . . . The Nuncio therefore wrote to the Pope and Cardinal Montalto, on the 10th of October, in the following manner:—

"His Highness has been ever since last Thursday, laid up with fever at the Poggio (a country pleasance of the Grand Duke's), an illness brought on by the fatigue of a deer hunt in which his Highness joined on Wednesday the 6th, when the weather was very hot. On the 7th he went with the Cardinal Archbishop of Florence, in a carriage to Miasa, which is five miles from the Poggio; during the journey he suffered much pain in his back. In the afternoon, when he was wont to take some rest, he went into the country and directed the cutting down of some trees to open an avenue, and remained there in the sun and wind. On the 8th, he returned to the Poggio and dined well as usual. After dinner, he was seized with violent vomiting. In the evening, about two hours before sundown he felt unwell, and in order to hide it he sate down to play picquet with the Count of San Secondo; but as his illness increased, he quitted his game, and retired to his chamber where he took some bezoar* in broth, then he returned to the company, where, about the time of the Ave Maria, he

* An antidote to poison.

conversed with the Grand Duchess and others, and so endured his suffering until two hours after sunset, when he was forced to speak of it; whereupon having summoned the physician of his brother, the Cardinal, who was there, he felt his pulse and pronounced him to have fever, and ordered him to go to bed; and that night he did not sleep, and the fever increased. On Saturday morning, the 10th, they took from him fifteen ounces of blood, and in the evening, two hours before sunset, four ounces more; nor did the fever at all diminish, which is considered to be a double tertian without any very painful symptoms, except a little dryness of the skin. It is thought, that the Grand Duke's illness has been caused by his having eaten for several days at his morning and evening meals, mushrooms cooked in various ways, of which he was very fond. The illness of the Grand Duke has much affected the Grand Duchess also, who has fever, but not to any great degree."

On the 12th he writes again . . . . "The Grand Duke . . . . on the night between Saturday and Sunday was quite easy, and remained so till dinner time. After dinner he did business with his secretaries. Last night he passed quietly enough, although he has had vomitings; but these were occasioned by the medicines given him, and were not violent."

He adds in cypher on another sheet, "The improvement in the Grand Duke's state is not so great as is supposed. The blame of this is laid on his Highness's want of obedience to the physicians, for he insists, contrary to their orders, on having not only snow and ice in his chamber, but he will drink everything iced, even the syrups, and does not abstain from transacting business to the displeasure of the two Cardinals who dare not enter unless they are called." On Sunday the 18th, which was the eleventh day of the Grand Duke's illness, he writes:—"He seems better, but it is only the last flicker of the candle which is going out. Yesterday morning, by order of the Cardinal de' Medici, Monsignor San Giorgio, Ambassador from Mantua to Spain, was refused an audience. The Grand Duchess is not well, but her fever is much decreased," and in cypher, "the change for the worse in the Grand Duke is not only an increase of fever, but he has convulsive tremblings, which cause much alarm. The physicians are accused of having weakened him by loss of blood &c. . . . At this moment I have received news that the Grand

Duke's Confessor was sent for in the night to the Poggio, that he is still there this morning, and that the Duke suffered much during confession. It is now two hours before sundown, and I have just received news that he is *in extremis*, and has received the most holy sacrament. So say the letters from thence, dated two or three hours back." At nine in the morning he writes:—"The Cardinal 'de' Medici is arrived, and has made known to me through Signor Eneas Venini, his pleasure, and the death of the Grand Duke, which took place last night, four hours and a half after sunset. He commended his wife, children, and family, to his brothers, referring as to other matters, to a will made by him two years ago. The city is quite quiet, and there is no fear of any movement." Lastly, on the 20th he writes:—"This morning about nine o'clock, the Grand Duchess died, overcome by the malignity of a disease which carried her off suddenly. Not on account of her grief for the death of her husband, which she did not know of. She died after receiving all the sacraments, with great firmness of mind. She made her son her heir. To her daughter she has left a certain quantity of grain, and to her ladies five thousand crowns. This evening at dusk, the body of the Grand Duke, in the ducal robes, was carried with 150 torches, and escorted by Florentine gentlemen, to the gate of San Lorenzo, where it was met by the bishop and clergy."

NOTES.

NOTES TO THE LIFE OF TULLIA D'ARAGONA.

1.—Page 7.

There is in the possession of M. Eugène Piot, of Paris, who has kindly communicated it to me, a contemporary song in celebration of the beauty and pomp of Giulia di Ferrara. It is of extreme rarity, and is a very curious morsel of Roman social history in the sixteenth century. The state, glory, splendour, and social standing of the celebrated Roman courtesan are vauntingly set forth in verses put by the writer into her own mouth. The intention, however, is evidently satirical.

2.—Page 13.

The phraseology of the original marks the nature of Strozzi's connection with Tullia more unmistakeably than any permissible English translation could do. The Italian words are, "Senza qualche pratica di donne non saprei vivere; onde ho più volentieri praticato seco, che con altra;" &c.

NOTES TO THE LIFE OF OLYMPIA MORATA.

1.—Page 39.

The entire passage runs as follows; "Prima era in grazia del Papa Madonna Lucrezia sua figlia, la quale è savia e liberale; ma adesso il Papa non l' ama tanto, e l' ha mandato a Nepi; e le ha dato Sermoneta, che gli costa ducati ottanta mila; benche il Duca—(her brother Cesare) —ghiel' abbia tolta, dicendo, 'è donna; non la potrà mantenere.' E si dice anche che esso duca ec^a.—(*sic*)—con la predetta sorella Lucrezia; il qual Duca sarà, se vivè, uno dei primi capitani d' Italia."

It is fair to observe, that the tenour of this ambassador's report seems to acquit Lucrezia of having been her brother's accomplice in the murder of her husband, Don Alphonso of Aragon.

2.—Page 70.

Olympia's biographers, M. Bonnet and Mr. Colquhoun, in a work entitled "Life in Italy and France in the Olden Time," have supposed that Morato was called to Ferrara by Alphonso to be tutor to his sons, and that this engagement was previous to his exile; and the former of the above writers names Ippolito and Alphonso as having been his pupils. The authority he cites is a letter of Curione; in which, however, it is simply stated that Morato educated two brothers of Hercules. Now, of the two named by M. Bonnet, Ippolito was born in 1509, and Alphonso in 1527, facts which alone cast some difficulty on the statement. Further, it is difficult to understand why, when Ippolito, the second son, and Alphonso, the fourth son, were entrusted to Morato, Francesco, the third son, born in 1510, should have been withheld from his care. But the question is set at rest and all made clear by the authority of the accurate work of Girolamo Baruffaldi, in vol. viii. of the Raccolta Ferrar. di Opusc., in which, as well as in Frizzi's elaborate history, Morato is stated to have been entrusted with the education of Alphonso and Alphonsino, the sons of Duke Alphonso by Laura Dianti, who was his wife—say the Ferrarese writers—his concubine, say the defenders of the Apostolic chamber, who considered these sons as illegitimate—after the death of Lucrezia Borgia. Alphonso was born in 1527, and Alphonsino in 1530. The elder would therefore have been six, and the younger three years old at the time of Morato's departure from Ferrara; dates which sufficiently prove that the tutorship in question must have commenced after his return in 1539, when the lads were respectively twelve and nine years old.

3.—Page 75.

Marot's lines run as follows:—

"Ha! Marguerite, escoute la souffrance
Du noble cueur de Renée de France;
Puis comme sœur plus fort que d'esperance
Console-la.

"Tu sais comment hors son pays alla,
Et que parents et amis laissa là,
Mais tu ne sais quel traitement elle a
En terre estrange.

"Elle ne voit ceulx à qui se veult plaindre,
Son œil rayant si loing ne peut attaindre;
Et puis les monts pour ce bien lui estaindre
Sont entre deux."

4.—Page 88.

The original Latin of Giraldi's lines is given here in justice to the author, and also in justice to the translator.

"Tota es splendida et emicas nitore,
Virtutum tenera educata in aula
Inter Virgineum chorum Renatæ,
Inter Pieridum chorum sororum.
Felix cui famulatur hæc puella!
Felices genuere qui parentes,
Et te nomine Olympiæ vocarunt!
Felicissimus ille, si modo ulli,
Uxor contigeris viro fruenda!
Hinc et non nihil ipse cum beatus,
Inter articularios dolores,
Cui talis faveat seni puella

5.—Page 89.

Here are Olympia's hexameters and pentameters in her own Greek:—

Ὅππστε μὲν ξυμπᾶσιν ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἤνδαγε ταὐτὸ,
Κ' οὔποτε πᾶσιν ἴσον Ζεὺς παρέδωκε νόον,
Ἱππόδαμος Κάστωρ, τρὶξ δ' ἦν ἀγαθὸς Πολυδέυκης
Ἔκγονος ἐξ αὐτῆς ὄρνιθος ἀμφότερος.
Κἀγὼ μὲν θῆλυς γεγαυῖα τὰ θηλυκὰ λείπον,
Νήματα κερκίδιον, στήμονά καὶ καλάθους,
Μουσάων δ' ἄγαμαι λειμῶνα τὸν ἀνθεμόεντα,
Παρνάσσου θ' ἑλαρὸυς τὸν διλόφοιο κορούς.
Ἄλλαι τέρπονται μὲν ἴσως ἄλλοισι γυναῖκες,
Ταῦτα δὲ μοὶ κῦδος, ταῦτα δὲ χαρμοσύνη."

6.—Page 99.

The few lines in the text on the subject of the watercourses of the lower valley of the Po, may serve to indicate the nature of the matters in dispute between the government of Ferrara and that of the Pope. But they are very insufficient to give any competent idea of that very

curious and interesting subject. And any attempt to do so would lead to a digression of most inordinate dimensions. The subject is not only one of very curious historical interest, but is of the highest economic and scientific importance at the present day. In one word, the remarkably friable soil of large districts of the mountain chain of Upper and Central Italy is in process of being moved away into the seas on either coast of the peninsula. The large low flats, which have been already formed by this process, make it difficult for the waters to transport across them the materials they are heavily charged with. Hence districts of extreme fertility, rice grounds, marshes, malaria, rivers running in embankments above the level of the surrounding country, inundations, malicious cutting of banks, fights, and demoralisation of the riverain populations, old havens destroyed, and finally deserted by the sea, commercial cities left commerceless, and a whole train of ulterior consequences. The subject is a very large one, and to him who would look beyond the mere temporary troubles of the Pope's despotisms, and churches, the most vital one of any that affects the future of Italy.

7.—Page 106.

Olympia's Greek hexameters and pentameters run thus:—

"Κάθανεν Ἀονίδων κῦδος μέγα Παρθενικάων
Βέμβος ὁ τῶν Ἐνετῶν φωσφόρος εἰναλίων.
Ὑπερ ξὴ βροτέοισι το νῦν ἐναλίγκιος ἐστι
Οὐδὲις οὐτ' ἔργοις, οὐτ' ἐπεέσσιν ἀνήρ.
Οὐ θανέοντος ἔδοξεν ἁμ' εὐεπίη πάλιν αὐτὸς
Εἰσίεναι στυγερὸν Τούλλιος εἰς ἀίδην."

8.—Page 129.

Here is the original of this curious and very obscure passage:

"De vestibus, petere illas non decet. Nam nuper Princeps per quandam mulierem nuntiavit mihi, non esse verum quod nobillissimi Camilli uxor quicquam de salutanda filia illi dixisset. Attamen quia filia hoc vellet, se id permettere factum; illam vero petiisse mihi unam vestem quam non prius se daturam quam ipsa rediisset, dixit. Hæc respondisse arbitror, ut viderem illam nihil mea causa facere, sed illius; et ut (sed tacere melius est, quod omnes vident) Lysippæ satisfaceret quam secum tunc fuisse credo. Ut ut hæc sint, illas me habituram vix credo. Vale."

M. Jules Bonnet gives no assistance towards understanding this

difficult passage. He translates (?) as follows, without any remark. "Il serait feu convenable de réclamer publiquement les objets que j'ai laissés à la cour. La duchesse m'a fait dire, par une de ses femmes, qu'il n'était pas vrai que l'épouse du noble comte Camillo Orsini l'eût chargée de salutations pour sa fille. Elle a cependant ajouté qu'à la sollicitation de cette dernière, elle consentait à ce que l'on me cedât une de mes robes, ce qui ne pourrait avoir lieu toutefois qu' après son propre retour à Ferrare. Cette réponse a été sans doute calculée pour me montrer qu'on agit ainsi, par consideration pour une autre, et non pour moi; ou plutôt elle a été inspirée par la haine de celle qui ne nous veut que du mal, et qui est en ce moment au palais. Mais il vaut mieux se taire sur un sujet, qui n'est un secret pour personne. Je n'espère rien obtenir quoi qu'il arrive." It will be observed that here is no attempt at translating "quia filia hoc vellet, se id permittere factum," seeing that by no possible construction could "hoc" refer to the giving of the robe, or to aught else than the salutation previously spoken of. Then why should "Lysippa" be changed into "the hatred of one who wishes us only ill"? Is it not more likely that Lysippa, whoever she was, merely wanted the dresses for herself?

9.—Page 159.

The works of Olympia were printed under the supervision of Curione, at Bâle, in 1570, with the following title

"Olympiæ Fulviæ Moratæ, fœminæ doctissimæ ac plane divinæ, opera omnia quæ hactenus inveniri potuerunt, et quibus Cælii Secundi Curionis selectæ epistolæ ac orationes accesserunt."

The work is dedicated by Curione to Queen Elizabeth. It is a volume of small octavo size, and that part of it occupied by the writings of Olympia consists of 244 pages.

The contents are as follows:—

Three prefaces to lectures on the Paradoxes of Cicero.

An essay on Q. M. Scævola in Greek.

Translations into Latin of two fables of Boccaccio.

A dialogue between Olympia and Lavinia della Rovere.

A dialogue between Philotima and Theophila.

Two books of letters. Of these forty-seven only are by Olympia. They are all in Latin, save one in Greek, written in her girlhood to her master Sinapi, and one in Italian. The rest of the letters are mostly from her correspondents to her. A few are from one of these to another on matters relating to her.

After the letters there are translations of eight psalms into Greek verse.

Five short pieces of a few lines of Greek verse.

Three equally short fragments of Latin verse.

NOTES TO THE LIFE OF BIANCA CAPPELLO.

1.—Page 222.

The original text of the judgment leaves no doubt of Bianca's indiscretion previous to her flight. Maria Donati is condemned, "quod fuerit adeo perfida et temeraria, quod dum esset ancilla in domo, v. n. d. Bartol. Capello, ausa fuerit ad instantiam Petri de Bonaventuris filii Zanobii Florentini, ut ejus animum et libidinem expleret lænocinium præstare in fallendo, et ad id alliciendo Blancham filiam prdict. v. nob. ex quo ipsa Blancha non solum habuit rem cum prædicto Petro, sed etiam cum ipso ex domo ejus patris et e venetiis aufugit."

2.—Page 248.

The important chronicle written by Settimanni, a Florentine patrician of the 16th century, and which contains more revelations of Medicean secrets than perhaps any other of the numerous "ricordi" of that period, is now at last being printed (it is said?) at Parma. Its existence, and the important nature of its contents, have long been well known by Florentine writers. But, for a long time, the only extant copy, which is preserved in the "Archivio delle Riformagioni," was not permitted to be seen.

3.—Page 299.

Galluzzi writes, that Francis consented to the wish of the ambassadors, who desired to crown Bianca. But that this is an error, and that the statement in the text is correct, is proved by the existence of a letter extant in the registers of the Senate, under the date of the 6th October, 1579, from the senate to the ambassadors Tiepolo and Michiel, ordering them to place a ducal crown on Bianca's head, "per accondiscendere al desiderio delle loro altezze," etc., etc.

Galluzzi probably thought that it *looked better* for Tuscany to represent that Venice was the requesting, and Francesco the consenting party.

4.—Page 301.

Few who have visited Florence will forget the strange irregularity in the plan of the "palazzo vecchio," and the legend which was, doubtless, told them to explain it,—that the republic would not suffer its palace to stand in any degree on ground accursed, by having been the site of the mansiòns of a vanquished faction,—dubbed, of course, when vanquished,—enemies of their country.

5.—Page 335.

There exists a tradition among the literary men of Florence, that the MS. of this history by Martinetti was purchased in Florence by an Englishman, and carried to England. The loss of it is much lamented by them, as there is reason to think that it would be found to be a more valuable history of the period of which it treats,—the reigns of the Mediccan Grand Dukes,—than any other extant.

6.—Page 337.

I have thought it as well to give the reader the original words of this strange passage in Signor Soderini's letter, that he may be the better able to judge for himself how far any such meaning as that suggested may, with any probability, be attributed to them. They run thus:

"Quando, che alli giorni passati la Morte cavalcò sopra il suo destriero magro, e disfatto per investirsi del titolo di Grande. La Morte ottenne a Roma il titolo di Grande, e conseguita ch' ella ebbe cossifatta indecentissima intitolazione, se ne cavalcava frettolosa alla volta del Poggio a Caiano, e quivi con irresistibile forza e pari valore assaltò il Grande Etrusco di Firenze e Siena, e lo abbattè alli 19 di Ottobre, 1587, a 4 ore e mezzo di notte, e di 47 anni lo privò di vita dopo strani e disusati scontorcimenti, e ululati e muggiti diversi."

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